CHARLES DICKENS AND THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE IMAGINATION

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SECTION ONE

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.

This thesis takes as its point of departure the analysis of a certain formal element which appears in narrative during the nineteenth century. It concentrates especially on the form this element takes in Dickens's works, particularly in *Great Expectations*, and in so doing it joins a large group of recent writings[1] in which critics have tried to develop more flexible ideas about the formal structure of Dickens's novels than had been current before. This new focus of attention has been important, because Dickens presents the critic with certain problems which can only be overcome if he develops a fairly complex sense of what might constitute the novel form when Dickens is handling it.

Dickens usually comes out of it badly whenever he is compared with the other great novelists - the classical realists - of the nineteenth century: novelists such as Flaubert or George Eliot or Tolstoy. Robert Garis's book *The Dickens Theatre* (RG) demonstrates this perfectly. Once assume that Dickens is doing the same kind of thing as George Eliot is doing in *Middlemarch* and the comparison simply annihilates all respect one might have for his work. However, as Garis admits, few of Dickens's readers have ever been satisfied to leave it at *that*. "Dickens was admittedly weak in coherence and organic complexity of structure, yet separate elements were brilliant and the whole work was informed with some quality - energy, passion, humour, gusto, heart - which made it great." (RG 4) These terms - "energy, passion, humour, gusto, heart" - are, unfortunately, not of much help to the critic. In literature

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1. One might mention Steven Marcus (SM), Robert Garis (RG), Taylor Stoehr (TS) among many others.

real power is always dependent on important truths being seen and said: if the critic recognizes obscurely that the power is there, and yet finds that a reading according to traditional expectations yields nothing better than a bouquet garni of stale and feeble cliché-truths, then he must learn to think about the writer and to read him in a new and more appropriate way. There are many languages of fiction, after all, in which a writer may encode his insights; perhaps the critic has made a mistake about the code being used, perhaps he has been reading his writer for the kind of writer he is not.

The grand question seems to be whether Dickens's novels are in any simple sense traditional realistic novels - essentially of the same kind, that is, as those of George Eliot or Tolstoy. Some crude delineation of the rules by which realistic fiction maintains its identity cannot be avoided here, if only to serve as a point of reference. Here, then, is a definition made with no reference to the metaphysical complexities of the style of vision the realistic novelist commits himself to:

In a realistic novel the meaning lies in the story, and the logic of this story is a logic of cause and effect (though of a complex, non-mechanical kind to be sure). Other patterns based on symbolism and non-causal cross-reference must be regarded as secondary and cannot be regarded as an excuse if the *story* doesn't hold water. They may not tide it over, fill gaps in it, distract from it, substitute for it. They may only act as additional colouring or emphasis to a narrative pattern that is complete. This narrative deals predominantly with concrete events, observable to some extent (at least in theory) by outsiders; it deals with human subjects who enter into relationship with the world through action. The characters are to be regarded as concrete people, not as symbols or phantoms or projections, and their actions are to be judged as we should judge actions in the real world. Realistic novels ask to be taken literally.

Now I do not think we can avoid taking this kind of realistic narrative as the primary stratum in each of Dickens's novels, the stratum on which all

other patterns and strata are based, and which holds them together. However, to say that the realistic narrative pattern is the primary one is not yet to say it is the most important one[1]. This remains open to discussion. It is at any rate true that the secondary patterns are far more significant in Dickens's novels than in most other novels of his time. Even comparatively early critics occasionally showed some awareness of this, as when Chesterton discussed *The Old Curiosity Shop* as a myth; but by and large most early criticism restricted itself to an analysis of the novels as realistic narrative. As I indicated earlier, this leads almost of necessity to a disastrous evaluation of Dickens as an artist: Garis found that whereas the great masters of realistic fiction could be regarded as truly dramatic, Dickens revealed himself over and over as no more than theatrical.

If all this is granted, the change in approach in the criticism of the last forty years becomes explicable. A search was on for new levels in Dickens's novels, new forms and patterns that, once understood, would reveal the 'rightness' of what might otherwise have appeared to be faults, and would moreover point to a more interesting content and meaning than the 'official' one.

Edmund Wilson must, I suppose, be regarded as a pioneer in this, though his 1939 essay[2] (*Dickens: The Two Scrooges* [EW]) is disappointing when looked at today. It was not so much that Wilson made a kind of psycho-analysis of Dickens, though this was to have its influence on later critics who saw the novels as determined in subject, pattern and emphasis by Dickens's own psychological needs (some of them unconscious); the important point was that

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1. Perhaps I can explain what I mean by this through an analogy: What a word in a poem denotes must be seen (at least formally) as its primary meaning; yet its connotations may be by far the more important 'meaning' artistically.

2. It is perhaps an over-simplification to refer to it as Wilson's "1939 essay" - the essay grew out of a course Wilson was giving at the University of Chicago in 1939, was first published in part in 1940, and as a whole in *The Wound and the Bow* in 1941.

Wilson saw Dickens as *strong* in structure, but in a structure working largely through symbolism - in effect, organization by theme.

While Wilson's individual analyses are disappointing, Leavis's article on *Hard Times*, appearing in *Scrutiny* in 1947[1], offered a fuller and more sensitive analysis along similar lines; whether Leavis was influenced by Wilson or not - probably not - his article was a real demonstration of what the approach (recognizing an 'organization by theme') could do.

It is interesting that the Leavises' analyses of Dickens have always given great prominence to the realistic-narrative aspect of the novels - and it is they who (due to their sympathy with the civilization Dickens was writing within) are able to show that this 'surface-meaning' is ultimately not as superficial as it is usually taken to be. Of course they do acknowledge other levels of meaning such as the symbolic and incorporate an awareness of them into their interpretations - but the level of realistic narrative remains, for them, quite simply the novels' 'reality-level', to which the other literary elements relate as metaphor to the literal.

Younger critics, on the other hand, have tended to want to break up the coherence and authority of this apparently dominant level or stratum. It has no longer represented the novel's ground of reality for them. They have set out to isolate codes of meaning that had remained hidden from critical consciousness before: codes that would be as coherent in structure - and so have just as much right to be called the novel's ground of reality - as the code of realism.

They point to the network of symbols that underlies a Dickensian novel. They show how Dickens creates meaningful structures even in the very setting-up of his *dramatis personae*. They are in fact most interesting when they reject (and try to dissolve) the narrative logic of the novels in favour of a different

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1. *The Novel as Dramatic Poem (1): 'Hard Times'* in *Scrutiny* XIV 3, Spring 1947. Reprinted in *The Great Tradition* in 1948, and in *Dickens the Novelist* (FRL & QDL) in 1970.

kind of logic. Even Garis did this in spite of himself[1]. He found that Dickens had made profound unconscious statements about aggression in *Great Expectations*, guided only by his theatrical instincts; Dickens's sense of theatrical rightness, Garis maintained, led him to a superbly organized statement that was not the novel's official statement and that he had not knowingly planned. Taylor Stoehr[2], to give another instance, saw the logic and structure of the novels as analogous, not to real life, but to the logic and structure of dreams (as understood by Freud). Another approach was actually to dissolve the concreteness of at least the minor characters, so that (for example) in *Great Expectations* Herbert and Orlick become opposing aspects of Pip's own personality[3].

In addition, critics have pointed to the elements of myth, of fairy tale, of popular fiction - each demanding its own style of reading - in Dickens's work[4]. It was demonstrated with what originality Dickens used these elements for his own deeper purposes. This was in fact a trait that had already been indicated by Edmund Wilson: "He creates the detective story which is also a social fable ... Henceforth the solution of the mystery is to be also the moral of the story and the last word of Dickens' social message ..." (EW 32-3) Here the banal conventions of what Germans call the 'Krimi' have attained to a position of equal dignity with the subtle coherence of realism - each method, by its own logic, expresses some part of the crucial truth.

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1. Compare Garis's usual view of the style of interpretation I am referring to, as expressed in the paragraph on his second page that begins: "The honourable motive in the recent apologetics has been an eagerly misdirected piety." (RG 4)

2. In *Dickens. The Dreamer's Stance.* (TS)

3. Robin Wood in *Personal Views.* (RW)

4. Marcus (SM), Killy (WK), Welsh (AW), et al..

My aim, as I have already indicated, is to isolate (and then reintegrate) one more such pattern or logic or code, one which may be found running alongside the realistic narrative structure of *Great Expectations*. This pattern or logic or code might act as the main principle of construction for a novel, and I take De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* as a work that could serve as a prototype for this kind of novel, even though it was originally conceived as an autobiography.

2.

The traditional novel tells the story of an individual by seeing him as involved in a network of cause and effect, as entering through action into a step by step dialogue with the world. The novelist shows how the protagonist's soul gives rise to projects that he then attempts to realize in the world; the world, in turn, offers resistance, and so rebounds on the soul and its project as critic, educator, and sometimes destroyer. This pattern is of course present in the *Opium-Eater*: among other things we see how De Quincey's character leads to the life he lives and the fate he suffers - it is a process which is examined in the normal novelistic way. But De Quincey is really far more interested in telling his story along quite different lines, and here we have what amounts to a new formal method: the depiction of a man's fate by a series of images or of configurations of imagery.

It is not at first clear how a succession of images or configurations of imagery *can* tell a story. True, they can form sequences - a series of opium-dreams, for instance, will have a common fund of imagery which it develops from dream to dream much as an artist sometimes develops a recurring stock of images or relationships in a sequence of paintings. But in saying this we

are already saying more than that these pictures make a story because one comes after the other and changes it; the existence of a sequence means we are carried behind the pictures to the mind that has experienced them, that has been haunted by this set of images and no other. Our 'new way of writing a novel' - in terms of the imagery that haunts a mind - is a powerful and intimate method for revealing and defining a protagonist's character and sensibility, particularly when the protagonist is telling the story himself.[1]

I am prepared to maintain that this tool or method is a really new one, non-existent before the romantic era. It is true that writers have long used the device of defining their fictional characters by an imagery that haunts their person and sometimes obsesses their speech. As an example we may take the way the characters of Anthony and Cleopatra are partly disclosed by the imagery Shakespeare associates with them. The difference here lies in the public and metaphorical nature of the imagery in Shakespeare's case. The imagery of armour or of architecture can be associated with Anthony because it has a certain publicly-accepted metaphorical meaning, or set of associations. Now in analyzing the imagery that haunts De Quincey and Pip we shall also often find that the author is using imagery metaphorically; but analysis along these lines always leaves a residue, we find, which is inexplicable in terms of metaphor.

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1. What this last clause hints at turns out to be quite important. Nearly all the texts I discuss combine some of the properties of the autobiography with some of the properties of the novel. They are life-stories told by the people who live them. De Quincey's *Opium-Eater* is an autobiography which has many of the qualities of a creative work - perhaps even a certain element of fiction. Wordsworth's *Prelude* and Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* belong in the same category. On the other hand, *Great Expectations* (like *David Copperfield*) is a work of fiction that takes the autobiographical form. By calling it autobiographical, I do not mean that it incorporates elements from Dickens's own experience - though it does that; I mean that the fiction presents itself as autobiography - the fictional protagonist (so we are to imagine) tells his own story. Dickens puts himself into the position of having to present Pip's life as it would have appeared to Pip. I would go further and say that Dickens was able to immerse himself so deeply in his created character's personality that he could develop an intuitive sense of the innermost parts of his psyche; perhaps even to the point of himself assimilating the unconscious determinants that organize Pip's experience and his memory of it.

The metaphorical significance of the haunting imagery is only subsidiary; the importance of the imagery, the thing that attaches it to a particular character, is that *it is imagery which has happened to him.*

In the *Opium-Eater*, De Quincey gives an account of the events that supply his later dreams with their imagery. Clearly there have been moments in his youth that were charged with a mysterious significance from the start, and these have become the focal points of his later dreaming. The question we need to raise now is why these particular moments should have such significance. This forces me to extend my formulation of 'imagery which has happened to him' in that the imagery doesn't merely 'happen' from outside; it makes such a strong impression because it is somehow chosen from within De Quincey, though from a source within him that is ultimately unknown to him. What is good about the expression 'happens to him' is that it conveys the impression of a kind of automatism: the significant moment, the moment which will set up a chain of haunting images, is chosen by something within him in an act which takes place outside his will. Some qualifications will be in place here.
It is true that the moments are frequently such as would be significant in any novel or biography, in that they are moments in which the character feels practical emotions of fear, relief, guilt, happiness - emotions connected with an active life in the world such as the novel has always dealt with. But even here there always appears to be a mysterious excess: the moments we are describing also seem to have an arcane significance for the experiencer which is not entirely explicable in terms of practical emotion. It is as if some moments brought with them configurations of imagery for which De Quincey's mind had already been prepared - that there was a readiness in him (whether innate or learned in childhood) for just those scenes, and that it was this readiness, ultimately, which gave the scenes their power to impress themselves on him so deeply.

Something from within him chooses. And another distinctive feature of these choices is their singularity. Few novelists and autobiographers - at least

until recently, and always with the exception of Dickens - have been prepared to show their heroes as forming bizarre and (at least superficially) inexplicable attachments to certain objects. To give a sense of emotional continuity novelists have preferred to show attachments to things and places which are 'understandable' - which readers are readily able to sympathize with because of the emotional or symbolic 'respectability' - the publicly accepted meaningfulness - of these things and places. An example is the mill in *The Mill on the Floss*: Maggie Tulliver would have felt the same about any place she had grown up in - yet this feeling is so much easier for the reader to enter into where the old home has been a mill: the nostalgia of mills is common imaginative property, for they point back to an earlier way of life, an earlier socio-economic dispensation - and even their presence to the senses as perpetually involved with moving water and changing light dissolves the clock time of the present and recalls the natural time of childhood. But in the *Opium-Eater* it is possible for the protagonist's imagination to be moved profoundly by a circumstance the significance of which is not immediately comprehensible to us - for instance by a room with an abnormally high ceiling. With De Quincey and Dickens and Baudelaire - city poets all - we enter into the sphere of a new lyricism: the bizarre lyricism that arises when the imagination finds itself in an emotionally uninterpreted world, a world where surrounding objects frequently appear inhuman or hostile or sterile; and are certainly not ordered and harmonious from the start as they might be in the world of an agricultural civilization, but require the private man's private interpretations and imaginative do-it-yourself. Because there was never before such a cleavage between the 'poetic' and the mechanical, never before such large areas in a man's experience of what was imaginatively unassimilable, there was never before such a necessity - and never such an opportunity - for the soul to choose its own imaginative property out of the chaos of the world.

This determined eclecticism of the soul finds a very suitable expression in our new narrative form; after all this form shows something in the hero's

personality choosing the images that are to haunt him. It acts (as we have already seen) as a means of defining a sensibility, but it also suggests a new conception of fate or destiny. We are given a sense that the framework of a man's mind is compelling the events that happen to him. To evaluate this literary effect, we must go beyond the merely literary and ask what real life experience, if any, corresponds to it.

Let us take an example from De Quincey's *Opium-Eater* - a work that is highly literary and yet presents itself as non-fictional autobiography. The example is one we shall be returning to (see p.II.29-30), but it can be broached here:

A certain pattern keeps recurring in De Quincey's waking and dreaming experience, a pattern that embodies itself in different forms - in milling crowds, or clouds, or armies, or seas - and yet retains an essential (perhaps rather abstract) content: circular, encompassing movements; a dynamic and unstable balance of forces; the gathering of particulars into conglomerate unities, etc. This pattern is particularly suitable as an image of London. It is how one would dream of London. No doubt when De Quincey dreams in this form, he *is* dreaming of London. But here is where the crunch comes: the pattern appears before he has any experience of London. In particular, it crops up in the form of an electric storm while he is staying a night in Shrewsbury, on the brink of entering the city. This storm makes a strong impression of inevitability, which is why it can be written of as a premonition - as if it were London itself come out to meet De Quincey and forewarn him of the life that lies ahead of him if he enters its streets. The sense of inevitability is due to our irrational feeling that the thunderstorm, and perhaps London itself, are part of a fate or an obsession-become-real that has its origin in De Quincey's brain.

In my opinion we cannot quite dismiss this feeling as a mere fictional device. And seeing that in sober reality De Quincey cannot control events to the extent of controlling the weather, we must see this sense of a fate 'wrought out from within' as a matter of the mind choosing - from an infinite

number - those events which are to constitute its story (and discarding the rest).

This at any rate seems a reasonable explanation of why one's account of De Quincey's life is always sliding back into the language of solipsism: language which speaks of the mind compelling events, of magical 'spots of time' isolated from flux, of prefigurations of the future, of sensations of *déjà vu*. The 'sequence of images or of configurations of imagery' has become more than a merely static way of portraying a sensibility; the recurrence of related imagery in the protagonist's life is presented as a psychologically-determined destiny or fate - because it appears to him as such.

3.

The next stage of our argument must be to ask why the new formal element, and the new conception of individual destiny which must have given rise to it, should have made their appearance at this particular moment in time: the close of the eighteenth century, almost simultaneously with the first appearance of the romantic poets. The new form, and the consciousness that corresponds to it, appear to me to be due ultimately to a freshly acute experience of the soul's alienation within its social and material environment. To discuss the causes of this alienation would be outside the scope of this thesis - but one can point to the extent to which writers since the romantics endorse the view that such an estrangement has taken place - whether due to the self-consolidation of capitalism, the destruction of an agricultural world by industrialism, the growth of the great cities, or the increasing tendency to deal with human problems by technological thinking, thinking determined by a limited goal.

The realistic novel of the nineteenth century was an extremely problematic[1] form, a heroic attempt to find some meaningful balance between what a man put into the world and what the world subsequently did to him. The greatest of these novelists were well aware of the hostile and alien solidity of the social and material world which confronted the individual; but they attempted nevertheless, by immense intellectual effort, to reach a standpoint from which they could perceive some meaning in his transactions with it. George Eliot is a pre-eminent example. Her understanding of action is one that uncovers a pattern of individual sin and retribution functioning despite the complexities of a fragmenting and apparently arbitrary world. We should not underestimate the intellectual labour she must have expended on understanding (and recreating in the form of fictional models) just how what begins as a weakness or indulgence in a character inevitably leads - through the agency of life's opportunities and pressures and chances - to some specific crime, and how the consequences of that crime (which involve full payment) are truly rendered inescapable by the structure of things.

George Eliot's project cannot be regarded as having failed, but we should be aware of the extreme difficulty of the task in which she eventually achieved her success. Novels that tackle such problems as she set herself with faith are courageous raids on the apparent unintelligibility of life, gauntlets thrown down in defiance of a world that was fragmenting as its economic and day-to-day life changed. Value - which ultimately flows only from *within* man - is here still the source and reward of action, and still has a role within the mechanism of the world.

There were nineteenth-century novelists, however, who were defeated by 'the mechanism of the world'. It appeared to them - naturally enough - to be driven only by the crudest and most fragmentary passions of fragmented individuals. Naturalism portrays the mechanism with elaborate care - but in

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1. The word 'problematic' is used here in the sense which Georg Lukács gives it in *The Theory of the Novel*.(GL)

it man's inner being and the value it creates have sunk to the grossness of crude greeds and satisfactions, or else their pathological perversions. For the naturalist, these are what 'motive' consists of. True desire, which is always linked to a vision of human potentiality, has become irrelevant to such a mechanism of a world, and to read Maupassant one would believe mankind's yearning for a fuller experience had died of being jilted by the actual social world.

But of course it did *not* die, and the importance accorded to poetry in the nineteenth century is an indication of where the age felt it could be assured of the life of mankind's finer possibilities: in the lyrical experience. What came about in the nineteenth century was like the effect of pruning. Denied anything like full expression in a public world, the soul's inner experience blossomed in a distinctly limited sphere, but blossomed the more intensely for that. The novel represented a particularly difficult task, an attempt to engraft inner meaning and value on the world *as a field of action*; moreover, the novel threatened to subordinate and perhaps lose this inner meaning to the numbing consciousness of a world felt as hostile to it. The romantic lyrical poem, however, being based typically on a momentary sense of harmony between man and nature, was able to preserve man's sense of his own value even where the novel failed. For man's heart was reflected in the universe, and every poem was a renewal of that covenant.

I believe it is possible to relate our new form of narrative - that based on a sequence of particularly significant images (or configurations of imagery) occurring in the life of a single man - to the kind of experience underlying the romantic lyric. For the experiences that initiate the sequences of imagery in our form resemble the lyrical experience in being comparatively isolated instances of a 'fit' between the imagination of the perceiver and the world that environs him. If anything, the experiences we shall have to deal with are *more* private, *more* enigmatic than those which typically form the basis of the romantic lyric; but this does not destroy the meaningfulness of the comparison.

In our form the imaginative meaningfulness of a moment - which might constitute a lyrical poem - is extended over a whole life, thus offering the individual a sense that his life is not wholly controlled by inexplicable outer events, but may be seen to take shape as a destiny worked out from within himself. Our form is the lyric made epic.

4.

It remains to us to evaluate this new element in narrative which we have isolated (and so by implication to evaluate also the new sense of individual destiny which underlies it). Both its value and its limitations tend to lie in the essential introversion that it gives expression to. Like the romantic lyrical poem, the new element in narrative is an affirmation of the imagination's value and power, of its mysterious roots in the unknown of the mind and its sovereignty over the individual's life and emotion. It extends the sense of value and meaning given by the momentary lyrical experience over the length of a man's life, so making a destiny of it; and in this it goes beyond what the lyrical poem attempts. At the very least it could become, as the lyrical poem became, a reassurance and a consolation in a world that had become hostile and incomprehensible to the human spirit. At best it was a means to preserve the spirit of the imagination in hard times; and in the effort of preserving the imagination it actually extended our understanding of the imagination's life - at least the most private side of its life - with an energy never known before.

The limitations of the new form, and of the conception of destiny that goes with it, lie in the opportunity they give for ignoring the independent structure of the outer world and the duty of man to realize imaginative value in this world through action. The type of destiny we are dealing with is not

formed in a dialectic between soul and world; it is a product of the soul communing with itself, and if it cultivates a special richness and resonance of the soul's own, it also cultivates some of the demons that grow from spiritual isolation.

In this thesis, Dickens is shown doing two things: first, providing, in *Great Expectations*, a structure in which the limitations of the new formal element are overcome by being synthesized with the traditional elements of the realistic novel; and second, providing a criticism (in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*) of the kind of introversion that the romantic sensibility might lead to.

Let us start by considering the first of these achievements. The new narrative method, even taken on its own, is the ideal method for portraying the development of an artist who finds that certain subjects, symbols, visual patterns, musical relationships, have a particular significance for him, the meaning of which is inexhaustible - and who then lives through the history of these fetishes of his imagination, leaving the record of his obsession in a series of related works. The *Opium-Eater* itself could be regarded as the portrayal of an artist's themes and development along these lines. But even the *Opium-Eater*, insofar as it portrays not merely an artist but a man, begins to stitch our new narrative form and the traditional narrative form (based on action) together, though in a somewhat haphazard way. *Great Expectations* shows the two forms in complete fusion. Dickens uses the new method there as a means to display the history of traumatic material in the mind as the character struggles with it and learns to deal with it. Pip's practical actions are at no point separable from his obsessions and his dreams.

The synthesis between the new formal element and the traditional narrative one, between the private life of the imagination and the outward practical life, is so complete and natural in *Great Expectations*, the two poles of the dialectic so essential to each other, that the separation of the two might seem something that is only possible in theory. Yet it is clear that in the nineteenth century as a whole the private life of the imagination had a tendency to make

itself relatively independent of the outward practical life; this tendency is in fact an index of what one might regard as the age's special moral sickness: Dickens demonstrates his own affinity with the sickness in a work such as *The Old Curiosity Shop*. However, Dickens became aware of the morbid dynamic of this sickness in himself, and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* may be seen as a criticism or 'placing' of the feelings that inspired the early work. In the last part of the thesis I shall be arguing that the age was able to enshrine its feelings about the 'private life of the imagination' in a complex of symbols which I refer to as 'The Death-Landscape'. By pursuing these symbols in their development from *The Old Curiosity Shop* to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* I hope to show Dickens's changing attitude to this region of the mind, and by doing this allow Dickens to make a critique, from within the age, of one of the age's achievements and obsessions.

CHAPTER TWO

DE QUINCEY

1.

It is really rather surprising that De Quincey has not been thought of and discussed more often as a representative figure of the nineteenth century. He is one of the first writers of whom one may say that he not only described the great city, but spoke from the new consciousness of the city-dweller; not only expressing the alienation of the streets in which men jostle like skittering dice, but also helping to develop some of the age's expedients for escape, for protection of the feeling self: withdrawal into a private emotional world, dreams of the peace and calm of nature, a saving sensation of awe before the profound workings of the memory and the mysterious depths of the spirit. No doubt Baudelaire, the first major poet of the modern city, recognised that many of De Quincey's interests and purposes ran parallel to his own. This, coupled with his interest in drug experience, would help explain why he translated him, and why his own prose style came to bear indelible traces of De Quinceyan sonority and suggestiveness. Baudelaire's interest should be grounds enough for taking De Quincey seriously.

It is difficult to say to what extent that which makes De Quincey representative of his age, and of the age that followed, is due to an actual influence on the writers who came after him. It seems more likely that his representativeness was due to an early sensitivity to factors that were to be more easy to understand later, an attunedness to new elements that were entering his civilization. Certainly his city-experience was central to this; he was specially vulnerable to it because of his particular character and because of the circumstances of his introduction to it. But equally important was his capacity to create new forms to express this special experience. The revision of

Confessions of an English Opium-Eater shows De Quincey in the process of better understanding and more fully exploiting a highly original structure only nascent in the first edition. I shall argue later that this structural principle of the *Opium-Eater* reappears in more hidden form as *one* of the principles animating the structure of *Great Expectations*. But although Dickens certainly read and admired De Quincey[1], it seems unlikely to me that this particular correspondence is due to influence. It rests, rather, on a parallel response to similar historical conditions.

However, let us begin with one area where actual influence would be easy to demonstrate: that of style. There is a tradition of rhetoric that begins with De Quincey and runs like a thread through the whole of the nineteenth century. The influence on Dickens need imply no particular spiritual affinity: De Quincey was an immediate predecessor, his words a part of the literary language that was there for Dickens's use. But we feel it is different with Carlyle and Ruskin. De Quinceyan rhetoric seized them because it was at the heart of their needs; Walter Pater's adoption of his 'dream-description' style for his own most characteristic effects was inevitable. And so some of what was implied by De Quincey's prose style surfaced at the heart of the late Victorian counter-culture - although what had been for him a search into the mind had now been transformed into a mood.

The link is plain enough: De Quincey's rhetoric evokes a sense of mystery and awe and provides a route into the world of the mind's phantasmagoria; it was thus particularly suited to evoke the nature of aesthetic experience as it was understood in Pater's time. But the sense of mystery evoked by De Quincey's prose is more than a mood; it is due to a real power, by which the imagination

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1. A passage from James T. Fields gives direct evidence on this matter: "There were certain books of which Dickens liked to talk during his walks. Among his especial favourites were the writings of Cobbett, De Quincey, the Lectures on Moral Philosophy by Sydney Smith, and Carlyle's French Revolution." (JTF 237 - 8)

of the reader is made able to meet the imagination of the author in a place where he has never been before. This is not the effect of rhetoric alone, but of a new approach to human psychology, involving bringing new areas of the mind to consciousness. I am not claiming that De Quincey 'discovered the unconscious' - all art does that. But the unknown within, like nature without, yields different booty to different forms of exploration; and the unconscious that De Quincey uncovered was not the same as Shakespeare's or as Freud's - leastways it showed a different face. The *Opium-Eater* is ultimately a highly original investigation of the mind, and this is what accounts for its idiosyncratic form.

2.

Many people, of course, would deny that the book *has* a form, at least in the sense in which one talks of the form of a work of art. In our time we tend to think of it as a kind of anthology: it is famous for its opulent descriptions of opium dreams. But we are wrong; we are doing the very passages that we praise an injustice. For though the opium dreams make magnificent set-pieces even on their own, they only yield full value when seen in relation to the rest of the text. However, the superficial tendency to break up into fragments of fine writing is not the only factor that might dissuade one from investigating the book in search of artistic form. Frequently it seems to be asking to be read as something that is non-art: as a factual, quasi-scientific record of unusual experience from a man in a unique position. Again, it is loaded (especially in the first section) with garrulous irrelevancies that may be charming and even interesting, but cannot be regarded as functional. Another difficulty is that De Quincey himself made renewed attempts at different times

in his life to explain his intentions (or, as he puts it, to vindicate his 'logic') and these attempts, at least on the surface of it, appear to contradict each other.

Nevertheless it remains true - and this is at least a place to start - that the *Opium-Eater* is one of those rare autobiographies that have all the interest of a novel. Several things must come together to make this possible: a distinct personality; a striking destiny; and enough self-involvement in the author for him to notice the connection between them. Nor will it matter if the author's invention sometimes comes to the aid of his memory. In fact, the kind of truth we are after requires the greatest possible saturation of the material by the writer's imagination. This is our only chance of understanding his fate. The autobiography becomes a novel when its hero's self-made image stands revealed as the originator of his story's inevitability.

The reader feels the inevitability of the *Opium-Eater*, but I find it difficult to analyze. So much of De Quincey's story is the result of mischance - often the most banal kind of bad luck that afterwards enlarges itself into sufferings which are anything but petty. Again and again it's as though there's only the thinnest of barriers - a barrier of bad luck or blindness - between the hero and his salvation from the nevertheless inexorable disaster; or as though he need only pause, unwind himself from the moment, and look round, instead of taking the irrevocable step which he always does take.

Then why are we prepared to accept this bad luck as something essentially one with the hero, mysteriously wedded to his character? In what happens, one really cannot speak of guilt - not in any ethical sense. This is in spite of the fact that De Quincey, although rationally he is always able to exonerate himself, has feelings about the past that are guilt feelings (more of this later). Then why are we not willing to take De Quincey's bad luck as accidental? He is predestined, like Tristan, to be unhappy. The very qualities that make him so admirable as a reporter of his story - his introspectiveness, the vivid clarity with which he perceives his own sensations, the way his sensations

themselves are hardly ever trivial, but set the whole of his imagination in motion - precisely these things (which imply, perhaps, an element of hypochondria) make it impossible for him to escape his own impulses. When he feels driven against the wall, he escapes blindly. There is a kind of irritable impatience in him, which has its nobility (showing an ultimate independence) but which persuades him to feel driven when strictly speaking he is not. Again his pride, involved in so many of his disastrous decisions, has real nobility; yet often, under the circumstances, and seen rationally, it must be adjudged a self-indulgence, the noblest of self-indulgences.

The book shows incommensurate sufferings arising from the weaknesses attendant (and necessarily attendant) on certain admirable qualities in a particularly attractive personality. The existence of this tragic link between personality and destiny is one of the things that make it - if there can be such a thing - an autobiographical novel.

Yet the book, even if it were fiction, would not be a *traditional* novel. The artistic plausibility of De Quincey's self-analysis through narrative, moving enough in itself, is a major factor in the book's success. But De Quincey's construction of the 'novel' makes it impossible for us to read it as primarily a narrative. Else why does the narrative fade into the background from the second section *(The Pleasures of Opium)* until in the last section *(The Pains of Opium)* time and sequence are almost completely dissolved? If the book is held together by being the analysis of a personality and a fate - as I believe - it is finally an analysis on a quite different principle from that which I have just described.

3.

At this stage it is worth looking at what De Quincey himself has to say about the *Opium-Eater*. The first quotation comes from the first edition of the book

in 1822:

The interest of the judicious reader will not attach itself chiefly to the subject of the fascinating spells, but to the fascinating power. Not the opium-eater, but the opium, is the true hero of the tale; and the legitimate centre on which the interest revolves. The object was to display the marvellous agency of opium, whether for pleasure or for pain: if that is done, the action of the piece has closed. (1822 O-E 419)

Then, in his introductory notice to *Suspiria de Profundis*, De Quincey returns to the question - now with a different emphasis:

The *Opium Confessions* were written with some slight secondary purpose of exposing this specific power of opium upon the faculty of dreaming, but much more with the purpose of displaying the faculty itself; and the outline of the work travelled in this course. (SdeP 449)

This follows a discussion of the importance of dreaming:

The machinery for dreaming planted in the human brain was not planted for nothing. That faculty, in alliance with the mystery of darkness, is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy. And the dreaming organ, in connection with the heart, the eye and the ear, compose the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of that mysterious *camera obscura* - the sleeping mind. (SdeP 448)

Arriving at this point it seems an inevitable step to go even beyond this: the theme of the *Opium-Eater* is neither opium, nor even the faculty of dreaming, but the part of the mind to which these things give access. While reading the book, what we are watching, with growing excitement, is the mysterious accumulation of impressions in the unconscious memory, and their interaction. In one section of the *Suspiria* De Quincey elaborates a metaphor for the mind:

What else than a natural and mighty palimpsest is the human brain? ... Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And yet, in reality, not one has been extinguished. And if, in the vellum palimpsest, lying amongst the other *diplomata* of human archives or libraries, there is anything fantastic or which moves to laughter, as oftentimes there is in the grotesque collisions of these successive themes, having no natural connection, which by pure accident have consecutively occupied the roll, yet, in our own heaven created palimpsest, the deep memorial palimpsest of the brain, there are not and cannot be such incoherencies. The fleeting accidents of a man's life, and its external shows, may indeed be irrelate and incongruous; but the organising principles which fuse into harmony, and gather about fixed predetermined centres, whatever heterogeneous elements life may have accumulated

from without, will not permit the grandeur of human unity to be troubled, in the retrospect from dying moments, or from other great convulsions. (SdeP 510-1)

This passage is in effect the fullest possible justification for a new poetic of the novel. The identity and unity of a human being couldn't be more real and unquestionable than in this organized multitude of forgotten images and impressions. All that is required is an artistically viable method of revealing it.

Proust knew a narrow gate into this inner world, the portal of the *mémoire involontaire*, accessible only when chance presented him with one of those special sensations that recalled the past, and that were scattered parsimoniously in a man's life (as in Proust's work) - never to be found by searching. De Quincey is playing with a more spectacular instance of the revelation of identity: "the retrospect from dying moments, or from other great convulsions". He gives the example of a woman on the point of drowning:

At a certain stage in this descent [into the abyss of death], a blow seemed to strike her, phosphoric radiance sprang forth from her eye-balls; and immediately a mighty theatre expanded within her brain. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, every act, every design of her past life, lived again, arraying themselves not as a succession, but as parts of a coexistence. (SdeP 511)

The dreams in which De Quincey's *Opium-Eater* culminates can be taken as convulsions of this kind, less complete in their revelation - but because of this having the advantage of *not* being absolute, so that they are broadly coloured by a human mood or emotion, full of suspense and actual spiritual drama. Later we will have Dickens going to any length of artifice to find entrance to this inner world, running the whole gamut of psychological short-circuits (natural or purely fictional) between the present and the forgotten past, from the most melodramatic of hallucinations to the most ineffable, half-comprehended intuitions.

4.

The basic construction of the *Opium-Eater* can be studied in a simpler,

more deliberate and artificial, form in the essay *The English Mail-Coach*. This is divided into three parts.

The first is a witty and garrulous 'essay proper' in the manner of Charles Lamb: a collection of anecdotes and whimsical digressions, ending with a description of what it was like to travel with the coach which brought news of victory.

The second part gives an account of a particular incident, in which a mail-coach with a sleeping driver gathers speed and upsets a light gig, apparently injuring, perhaps killing, a woman passenger. The accident is described as it is experienced by the author, who is under the influence of laudanum - there is something strangely frozen in the scene as he remembers it: it is nightmarish, even in the tranquility that precedes the crash.

The third part - "The Dream-Fugue" - is an actual nightmare, in which the dramatic elements of the crisis - the silent, tranquil landscape, the light mists, the road, the sweeping movement, the action of the horses, the image of the gesticulating woman receding into the distance as the coach continues - make themselves free of their narrative context, take on a life of their own, interact in a new, independent way, more as symbols than as memories, building up a drama that is essentially musical. Some images are transformed into related ones. The road flanked by trees and compared to a cathedral aisle appears in the dream only *as* a cathedral aisle. Or the significance of an image is changed in the dream to a new significance, related but different. The woman's gestures of despair or agony suddenly suggest a figure waiting for the trumpet's call of resurrection. The woman becomes interchangeable with the other female figures that haunt De Quincey's dreams - his dead sister and Ann. The thought of her possible death is transformed, in the dream, into a vast outburst of imagery connected with violent death or the grave - battlefields and necropolises. The whole is given an apocalyptic breadth and significance, an effect towards which images drawn from the first part, the victory rides, contribute - crowds becoming seas or clouds or armies.

In the piece as a whole it is clearly the dominant, obsessive images that matter, as they divide from their autobiographical setting and develop and interact in the isolation of the author's fantasy. You can't tell how far the final 'dream' *is* just that, the report of a nightmare, or how far it's a reworking, with the author attending boldly and delicately to the analogies and associations suggested by his more deeply submerged imagination. Whatever the case, De Quincey knew what he was after in *The English Mail-Coach*. The section titles 'frame in' the central area of interest: "The Glory of Motion"; "The Vision of Sudden Death"; "The Dream-Fugue". The essay is a portraiture of *speed* by way of a fantasia between the images which experience and contemplation of it suggest.

The first version of *The English Mail-Coach* was written in 1849. The earlier *Opium-Eater* (1822) is less conscious of its artistic intentions as it moves. One consequence of this is that it strikes one as more natural, less a matter of artifice. In it, too, images appear first in the narrative, and are then caught up and developed - in the timelessness of musical form - by the dreams. But here the subject is something broader than the mere sensation which is speed. The *Opium-Eater* is the portrait of a man, a revelation of the palimpsest, his mind. And the method of portraiture is the tracing through their different forms and manifestations of those images that for one reason or another haunt him, dog his footsteps.

5.

As a matter of convenience, I now propose first to look at these images as they appear in the dreams. That is, my aim to begin with will be to examine not the memories that give rise to the images, but the answering part in De Quincey

that caused his unconscious to be obsessed by these images in particular. After this I shall return to what comes first in the book: the images as they make their appearance in the course of his active waking life, and not in the relative timelessness of his dreams.

Now the images that obsess De Quincey in his dreams have a certain spider-web unity: rabbit-warren architecture, crowds, armies, stormy seas paved with faces; dwarfing grandeur, vastness of space and time. The oriental dreams "Under the connecting feeling of tropical heat and vertical sunlights" fit into the same mould - "immemorial tracts of time", "vast empires", "pagodas", "narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids", "confounded with all unutterable abortions", "monstrous scenery". (1856 O-E 320-1) There is, of course, an opposite to the oppressive grandeur and constant swarming movement of these dreams - in the impressively powerful 'tranquil' landscapes, with their suggestion of death, and grief that has been overcome. But these rather complete the general unity, as a complement, than disturb it.

The crowd can be taken as the type of all this imagery, as one of the centres of the admittedly loosely-woven unity. It has its sources in the scenes of De Quincey's life, but is given a tremendous fascinating power by its correspondence with the age's mental pictures of recent historical events, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars - the kind of more-or-less shared pictures that the journalist plays on. These particular pictures were new in history, the product of a new kind of political event: really vast popular movements and struggles; struggles, moreover, in which significant (apocalyptic, they must have seemed) moral issues were involved. The image of the crowd haunted the age in a way it could never have done at any period before.

> Somewhere, I knew not where - somehow, I knew not how - by some beings, I knew not whom - a battle, a strife, an agony, was conducting - was evolving like a great drama, or piece of music; with which my sympathy was the more insupportable from my confusion as to its place, its cause, its nature, and its possible issue. I, as is usual in dreams (where, of necessity, we make ourselves central to every movement), had the power, and yet had not the power, to decide it. I had the power, if I could raise myself, to will it; and yet again had not the power, for the weight of twenty Atlantics was upon me, or the oppression of inexpiable guilt. (1822 O-E 429-30)

This passage already suggests, however, that the image of the crowd can be viewed from another point of view, which is if anything more important than the historical one. We can gain an inkling of it if we analyse what the mere sight of a crowd in action means to us.

The crowd is vast, but made up of a thousand particles, which are various but add up to a simpler mass which moves all together; it is human and yet elemental, it empties and fills spaces, takes indisputable possession, it decides things - and by the organic mustering of a thousand particulars. Moreover, the crowd's activities always fill the entire horizon of De Quincey's dreams - there is nothing outside them - the same is true of his tossed seas and infinite architecture.

In his film on the October Revolution, Eisenstein shows a crowd of revolutionary townsfolk sweeping across a palace courtyard, possessing it, filling it. This scene is accompanied, for the viewer, by an ineffable sense of mastery achieved and of liberation. The sensation is of a kind that cannot adequately be explained as a response to political victory, or even to the human victory of the participants, though of course it fuses with these responses. There is a sense in which *the mere visual image* either produces an inner liberation (as a mandala, when contemplated, is supposed to produce unity of the spirit), or else persuades the mind to recall earlier instances in which it has gained mastery over itself, so that it is able to resavour at least the sensation of victory.

We may observe a similar instance in the spiritual sensations experienced by people in watching clouds, or the sea. The image of the cloud-filled sky is used sparingly in the *Opium-Eater*, but it is a favourite image of De Quincey's elsewhere. One can show its relationship with the crowd imagery as follows: sky packed with moving cloud - turbulent sea - sea paved with faces - massed and surging crowds. Speaking for myself, I have never found myself watching a whole skyful of clouds of different species moving, massing, colliding, clearing, changing with the light (particularly at sunset) without feeling that some similar change is finally resolving itself in me after long preparation,

some knotty point in my inner life being overcome - whether it's the clouds that have caused the change, or the change that has caused me to notice the clouds, or whether the sense of significant inner change has been pure illusion. Such symbols - crowd, sea, cloud-filled sky - seem to act as a mirror of unconscious mental activity: conflict, synthesis, reorganization.

Consider how well this imagery suits with the image De Quincey has himself chosen to represent the mind, the palimpsest: multifold, consisting of a thousand particulars - all the impressions that have fallen upon it - bewildering to reason, a mass of tangled script; yet organized, the thousand particulars grouping according to organic, though partly hidden, principles. It is only necessary to see that palimpsest come to life and start to move, with its particulars dividing, forming new alliances, regrouping under the pressure of new experience, and the swarming manuscript will come to look like one of De Quincey's dreams. On one level, then, De Quincey's dream-imagery reflects "motions of the intellect" (see P.II.13); unconscious activities of the mind, that underly the dreams themselves.

This being so, we can imagine one way in which De Quincey might have been able to use dreams as a novelistic device: he might have asked us to follow the changing configuration of symbols from dream to dream, noting for instance the degree or balance and integration implied by them, so that in this way we should be able to reconstruct the story of De Quincey's inner mind, using the dreams as a spiritual thermometer. In fact, De Quincey doesn't make the fullest possible use of this method - his dreams are not even given chronologically. However, the structure of the last part of the book does show *some* tendency to use the dreams in this way, as an indicator of spiritual harmony or chaos.

Consider the structural peak at which De Quincey places an evocation of his early opium reveries. This is primarily taken up by the description of a specimen trance at a window in a house at Everton, and culminates in the famous passage: "O just, subtle, and all-conquering opium!" (1856 O-E 276)

The trance is described as follows:

At that time I often fell into such reveries after taking opium; and many a time it has happened to me on a summer night - when I have been seated at an open window, from which I could overlook the sea at a mile below me, and could at the same time command a view of some great town standing on a different radius of my circular prospect; but at nearly the same distance - that from sunset to sunrise, all through the hours of night, I have continued motionless, as if frozen, without consciousness of myself as of an object anywise distinct from the multiform scene which I contemplated from above. Such a scene in all its elements was not unfrequently realized for me on the gentle eminence of Everton. Obliquely to the left lay the many-languaged town of Liverpool; obliquely to the right, the multitudinous sea. The scene itself was somewhat typical of what took place in such a reverie. The town of Liverpool represented the earth, with its sorrows and its graves left behind, yet not out of sight, nor wholly forgotten. The ocean, in everlasting but gentle agitation, yet brooded over by dove-like calm, might not unfitly typify the mind, and the mood which then swayed it. For it seemed to me as if then first I stood at a distance aloof from the uproar of life; as if the tumult, the fever, and the strife, were suspended; a respite were granted from the secret burdens of the heart; some sabbath of repose; some resting from human labours. Here were the hopes which blossom in the paths of life, reconciled with the peace which is in the grave; motions of the intellect as unwearied as the heavens, yet for all anxieties a halcyon calm; tranquility that seemed no product of inertia, but as if resulting from mighty and equal antagonisms; infinite activities, infinite repose. (1856 O-E 275-6)

Here opium has caused - or aided - or simply revealed - a balance in the midst of tension and tumult: a state of mind and memory where the multifariousness of experience is simplified, but to organic entities; wrongs are righted; guilts worked out; "the faces of long-buried beauties, and the blessed household countenances" called into "sunny light", "cleansed from the 'dishonours of the grave'". The stylish idolatry with which De Quincey colours his celebration of opium is really a cloak under which he is discussing the kind of grace that rises from the roots of the mind. It is not that opium brings an escape from mental suffering through stupefaction or temporary amnesia. On the contrary, it is precisely that memory lives with a fulness and inner relevance that it normally doesn't have; "the organizing principles which fuse into harmony" (SdeP 510-1, see p.II.6) are at work on the material.

However, the material itself is formidably alive and active, potentially disruptive. The effect of the passage is of a temporary harmony which, however sovereign in itself, is precarious for the future, being composed of vast forces in movement. And it is with this passage that De Quincey ends the section on

"The Pleasures of Opium"[1]. It is poised on the brink of the abyss that follows, in which De Quincey is to be haunted and his peace deranged by the independent surgings of his dream-phantasmagoria.

The paradise of first memories that opium and sleep had once been able to restore is only glimpsed again in the last lines of the book, as a clearing process takes place that is itself described in such a way as to resemble a process in one of De Quincey's dreams:

> One memorial of my former condition still remains: my dreams are not yet perfectly calm: the dread swell and agitation of the storm have not wholly subsided: the legions that encamped in them are drawing off, but not all departed: my sleep is still tumultuous, and, like the gates of Paradise to our first parents when looking back from afar, it is still (in the tremendous line of Milton) -
>
> With dreadful faces throng'd and fiery arms.
>
> (1822 O-E 433)

6.

In spite of what De Quincey himself says (see II.6), the subject of *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* *is* the opium-eater, *is* De Quincey; opium, and dreaming, can better be considered as its method, the means of revealing certain aspects of De Quincey's mind more fully than ordinary narrative could do. The imagery of the dreams builds up a complex picture of his individual sensibility. It is not my purpose to describe this sensibility; that would require a book in itself. However, leaving aside the question of how the imagery that populates De Quincey's dreams reflects an elemental temperament or

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1. In the original (1822) version, that is. In the revised version part of the "Introduction to the Pains of Opium" is shifted rather clumsily into the end of the section "The Pleasures of Opium", so that the 'specimen trance' loses its climactic finality.

sensibility, I should like to indicate briefly how De Quincey's way of life may be seen as partly determining that imagery.

The repetitive labyrinths of his architectural dreams often seem like the characteristic aftermath (though unusually distinct) of mental fatigue such as one might expect in a scholar. There is generally a sense of strain - imaginative strain, such as one might expect in a person who has read widely and with an incomparably energetic curiosity. No wonder he should come up against "counter-sympathies deeper than [he] can analyse." (1856 O-E 320) One can see here the cause of the sheer monumental oppressiveness of some of the dream-scenes. Have this restless curiosity, backed by a visual imagination that can be touched off by the slightest hint, work in a man who has suffered long periods of loneliness and who anyway tends to introversion; you will almost inevitably get these appalling dream-images of an ant-like identity dwarfed and helpless in vast, yet distinctly, aggressively, characterized spaces.

At least as important, if not more so, was De Quincey's experience of London. The labyrinthine, rabbit-warren aspect of the dream imagery is an expression of the actual landscape of London, coupled with a Balzacien sense of its labyrinthine workings. The vastness so disturbingly experienced in the dreams is an expression both of the concrete vastness of the city and of the sensation of insignificance that the city, in many different ways, imposes on the individual. The dreams' restlessness, their quality of swarming depersonalized life, is a clear enough representation of the streets in which De Quincey wandered. City-experience is shock-experience[1]; the city flashes information at the beholder faster than he can assimilate it, producing strange anxieties and inadequately defensive anaesthesias (which merely force the business of registering impressions on to more unconscious and even more vulnerable parts of the mind).

The imaginative effect of all these experiences was intensified by De Quincey's suffering and isolation, as he himself makes clear in a passage I shall quote later (see p.II.25).

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1. See Walter Benjamin on Baudelaire (WB 160-78)

7.

We come now to the case of particular incidents in De Quincey's life giving rise to dreams, or to images in the dreams. This is one of the most obvious unifying factors in the *Opium-Eater*: the incidents in the first part of the book (which is narrative) explain the origin of the dream-imagery, which is then worked with symphonically in the latter part.

It is as the origin of future dream-chains that certain things in the first part stick in one's mind so vividly. A row of isolated presences remain in the mind, lit with a peculiar intensity: the woman De Quincey meets on the side of the Cop, the man who first sells him opium, the ten-year-old girl in the Greek Street house, Ann the street-walker, and the Malay at Grasmere. None of these are in any sense vividly-drawn *characters* - but they are overwhelmingly vivid and significant presences insofar as they partake of the unfolding drama of the book. They are fateful presences. But the fate that they initiate is not fate in the ordinary sense: hardly one of them could be said to have changed the course of De Quincey's outer life - or, at least, this is not the significant thing about them. They are fateful presences in the sense in which certain incidents are fateful in Wordsworth's *Prelude*, having a special influence on the development of the subject's inner fate, the fate of his imagination.

The most obvious example of an incident that sets up a chain reaction in De Quincey's dreams is the account of the Malay who mysteriously appears in De Quincey's cottage, sleeps on the floor, gratefully accepts an offer of opium, swallows it all on the spot (though the amount would be fatal to anyone not accustomed to opium) and disappears without trace.

De Quincey calls the incident a trivial one. Except on the surface, it is not. One thing becomes clear in the course of the book, and that is that the connections which exist between events and the opium-eater style of dream are not trivial or banal, not the kind of mechanical recollection or regurgitation of imagery which you get in your everyday dream. De Quincey is dealing with

the inner circles of the soul's experience, as Yeats is in the poem, 'A Deep-Sworn Vow':

> Others because you did not keep
> That deep-sworn vow have been friends of mine:
> Yet always when I look death in the face,
> When I clamber to the heights of sleep,
> Or when I grow excited with wine,
> Suddenly I meet your face.
> (WBY 174)

And we find that the incidents that are later to reappear in the dreams grip us at first reading. There is something about them, an excitement sometimes incommensurate with what we see happening on the surface.

Taking our cue from Yeats, we will expect a mysterious bond between the dreamer and the face that haunts him, a unique jigsaw-puzzle fit between daemons, a connection that the circumstances of the meeting, taken on their own, could not explain. In the case of the Malay we clearly have a 'fit' of elemental antipathy: the Malay is (or evokes the image of) De Quincey's anti-self. De Quincey discusses the dreams he gives rise to in the following terms:

> In China, over and above what it has in common with the rest of Southern Asia, I am terrified by the modes of life, by the manners, by the barrier of utter abhorrence placed between myself and *them*, by counter sympathies deeper than I can analyse. (1856 O-E 320)

Naturally such antipathy implies a fascination too, but a fascination which is finally overruled by simpler feelings:

> Some slight abstraction I thus attempt of my oriental dreams, which filled me with such amazement at the monstrous scenery, that horror seemed absorbed for a while in sheer astonishment. Sooner or later came a reflux of feeling that swallowed up the astonishment, and left me, not so much in terror, as in hatred and abomination of what I saw. (1856 O-E 321)

During the meeting itself, it is not so much through De Quincey's own feelings that the antithesis is expressed as through the contrasts in the tableau that he sees in the kitchen (where Malay sailor and English countrywoman confront each other): a tableau visually striking enough in itself, and made the more statuesque and archetypal in effect by the primitive reactions ("simple awe") perceived in the servant and the child.

The whole incident is heightened by a sense of mystery not easily defined.

One is strangely disinclined to accept the explanation which De Quincey offers, that the Malay is simply on his way to a seaport (though after all, why not?). The same unreasonable mystery clings to his departure, never to be heard of again - a mystery only because we share De Quincey's anxiety - he is afraid of hearing that the Malay has been found dead on the roadside. It is that particularly horrible kind of anxiety which follows one's unconsidered actions. De Quincey gives the opium somewhat frivolously, out of a pity "qui ressemble un peu ... à la charité des ivrognes" (Baudelaire CB 598). Who would want judgement to fall on actions he has undertaken in this spirit? Again, is the uncertainty of not being judged any better? It is made a disturbing thing, that the Malay comes out of nowhere and disappears into nothing. And the fairy-tale logic of such a situation would be that he has no other existence - he is a visitation, and only exists for the benefit of De Quincey.

And why is De Quincey singled out for this visitation? Because he is a scholar. "The servant ... gave me to understand that there was a sort of demon below, whom she clearly imagined that my art could exorcise from the house". (1822 O-E 406) His learning is the quality that will enable him to speak to the apparition. Not in fact, for the closest he can come to speaking Malay is knowing the Turkish word for opium. No, this power to exorcise is only wished on him because of the superstitious awe (conveniently exaggerated in the account) in which he, as an intellectual, is held by his neighbours. *They*, we are asked to believe, class him with the Malay in belonging to the species of the unintelligible.

And what happens when the two of them are face to face?

> ..... as I had neither a Malay dictionary, nor even Adelung's *Mithridates*, which might have helped me to a few words, I addressed him in some lines from the Iliad; considering that, of such languages as I possessed, Greek, in point of longitude, came geographically nearest to an Oriental one. He worshipped me in a most devout manner, and replied in what I suppose was Malay. In this way I saved my reputation with my neighbours: for the Malay had no means of betraying the secret. He lay down upon the floor for about an hour, and then pursued his journey. (1822 O-E 407)

It is all a rather silly joke, with the author well aware of its silliness. While putting a brave front on it, De Quincey is in fact *totally* unable to

communicate with the Malay. Interesting things happen, however, if we read the passage not according to the logic of the realistic novel, but according to the logic of the fairy-tale, a logic by which the triviality of an episode is a sure sign of its significance. In the fairy-tale it would be quite possible for two magicians to communicate with each other without having a language in common, provided they communicated in magic formulae (which have a special transparency due to their special link with nature): in this passage the broken fragments of esoteric languages do service (by some prestidigitation of the mind) as magic formulae, even while we are aware of their absurdity.

We might get closer to the mechanism of the mind that De Quincey is playing on by considering an aspect of the logic of dreams. In waking life, something which looks like communication to the outsider, but not to the two people directly involved, is simply not communication. But would it be the same in a dream? Wouldn't the mere existence of *some belief somewhere that there has been communication* be sufficient to convince the dreamer that *somewhere in the field of the dream communication has taken place*? The two men encounter each other as in a dream encounter. It is a devil's pact - words are said and their being understood, their meaning, is of little importance - and for De Quincey, in his dreams, the gates of hell will be opened.

In further explanation of the mechanism at work here, let me adduce a scene from *Bleak House*. Esther and Allan go to Westminster Hall where the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case is being tried, and find an unusual crowd filling the Court of Chancery. As they stand on the pavement of the Hall, people start streaming out. The Jarndyce and Jarndyce litigation is over.

> Our suspense was short, for a break-up soon took place in the crowd, and the people came streaming out looking flushed and hot, and bringing a quantity of bad air with them. Still they were all exceedingly amused, and were more like people coming out from a Farce or a Juggler than from a court of Justice. We stood aside, watching for any countenance we knew; and presently great bundles of paper began to be carried out - bundles in bags, bundles too large to be got into any bags, immense masses of papers of all shapes and no shapes, which the bearers staggered under, and threw down for the time being, anyhow, on the Hall pavement, while they went back to bring out more. Even these clerks were laughing. We glanced at the papers, and seeing Jarndyce and Jarndyce everywhere, asked an official-looking person who was standing in the

midst of them, whether the cause was over. "Yes", he said; "it was all up with it at last!" and burst out laughing too. (BH 65 785)

We later find out the reason for the law personages' inordinate mirth: Jarndyce and Jarndyce has been wound up, not because the litigation has been settled, but because costs have eaten up the entirety of the estate under litigation. The laughter is thus cynical and derisive; yet, by a kind of 'optical illusion' we are empowered to see it double, and to one fragment of our attention the laughter looks like joyous participation in a kind of carnival of life. This impression rests on the way the imagery of this passage interacts with the network of symbolism that is woven through the whole novel: the piles of documents represent the rubble and muddle of a society that is being choked by its own institutions; they represent all that has come to separate man from man; their removal into the fresh air and the light of day, to be treated ignominiously and laughed at, necessarily produces a sense of liberation and renewal: the world can be begun again. We are reminded of Miss Flite, who equates the end of the suit with the Last Judgement and the renewal of the world. The interpretation of the scene as joyful, it is true, takes place as if in a dream; it is a careless first impression, one of those visionary glances out of the corner of the eye, into which we project a greater proportion than usual of our hopes and fears. And because of the double vision Dickens has found latent in his reader - the accurate appraisal and the glance out of the corner of his eye, simultaneously - Dickens is able to make him see two contradictory things: the real tragedy with which the Chancery suit ends (followed shortly by the death of Richard), and the inordinate relief of its ending (which is able to hint, as if in a dream, at a world without institutions). The ambivalent laughter of bystanders is made a pivot of the pain of seeing reality and ideal at once.

The passage about De Quincey and the Malay depends similarly on the reader's capacity for being tricked into seeing the scene double. De Quincey knows that there is more than the ordinary mechanical cause-and-effect relationship between the event and the dreams, that there is a principle of selection at work here

which is lodged in the deepest and most mysterious part of his personality. And this part of himself, being stirred, has even at the time given the incident a special flavour for him, of a kind he cannot express by ordinary means. So he sets out to tear open the mundane reality by distorting it. He *also* wants to keep the reality; so his exaggeration and romanticization is carefully playful and self-ironizing. But he plays on the mystical reputation of oriental languages, somehow (almost by very negation) gets *himself* associated with this, then brings to bear on it all the superstitious distrust with which simple people allegedly regard foreigners and polyglot intellectuals - and finally makes the whole thing stick by a bit of preposterous foolery which the reader's aroused and now frustrated imagination perverts (if only in some obscure recess of the mind) into a mystic conference between two mages.

8.

Let me recapitulate: In the *Opium-Eater*, every strand running through the dreams has its starting-point in an event; even at the time, this event (which is to stand at the origin of a private imaginative adventure) has a special quality that gives it a pre-eminence, for the experiencer (and perhaps for him alone), over the other events of his life, many of which might seem, on the surface, more important. There are two questions we may ask here: first, what makes this particular event so important for the author-hero; and second, what means does he use to convey its importance for him (and thus its special quality) to the reader? The first question does not answer the second, as the importance *for the author* is too private to be conveyed naturally; he is compelled to use methods that frequently look like tricks - or at least have more claim than the usual methods of a good writer to the dubious title of literary 'devices'. This does not, however, diminish their interest, as these

'devices', however artificial, still rely for their effect on certain far-flung and hitherto ignored aspects of the way we experience reality. The delineation of an 'inner fate', a 'private life of the imagination' compelled the authors of the romantic period to discover new devices of expression, which in turn involved appealing to a greater spectrum of the mind's activity. Hence the value of analysing the 'pre-eminent moments', the moments giving rise to a private imaginative chain of events - and analysing also the literary technique of them - as they appear in De Quincey, in Wordsworth, in Dickens.

Here we return to the first question: what makes these particular events so important *for the author-hero himself*? If we look again at the episode of the Malay at Grasmere we find there are two aspects to the answer. First there is this powerful magnet, a submerged elemental part of De Quincey's imagination, which attracts to his mind certain images associated with the Malay, and leads him to constitute the Malay as a nightmare opposite. So far as this goes, the effect the Malay has on him is non-moral, 'aesthetic', elemental. The strength of the passage, however, is that these elemental relationships are used in conjunction with the more familiar elements of a novel: moral choice, responsibility, guilt.

In other words, there are moments in the *Opium-Eater* when the business of living in a world where there are other people is related in a new and striking way with the private drama of the soul. There can be no doubt that De Quincey feels guilt about giving the opium, and allowing the Malay to go off once he has swallowed it - and that he dreams about the Malay because of this sense of guilt. As so often in De Quincey, we recognise this sense of guilt because he protests too much. Yet his protestations are reasonable enough. What else could he have done?

The meaning of guilt in the *Opium-Eater* is not any of the unquestionable and usual meanings. It is not a matter of clear moral choice, not in the ordinary sense. De Quincey's decision to run away from school is a choice - for which he blames himself later - but the error is practical, not moral;

a matter of miscalculation, at worst the result of weakness. De Quincey does not accuse himself of vice either. This is the accusation which, as an opium-addict, he has every reason to expect; and he counters it in a way that is perfectly adequate. He is not a person of vicious habits, and he knows it. His sense of overwhelming guilt, as it manifests itself, not rationally, but in his dreams, is rather a sense of human helplessness, of inadequacy to the tests that are imposed on him, or that might be imposed on him - and normally these tests are quite undefined.

De Quincey discusses this kind of guilt in *The English Mail-Coach*, in the section called "The Vision of Sudden Death".

> Meantime, one aspect of sudden death there is, one modification, upon which no doubt can arise, that of all martyrdoms it is the most agitating - viz., where it surprises a man under circumstances which offer (or which seem to offer) some hurrying, flying, inappreciably minute chance of evading it. Sudden as the danger which it affronts, must be any effort by which such an evasion can be accomplished. Even *that*, even the sickening necessity for hurrying in extremity where all hurry seems destined to be vain, even that anguish is liable to a hideous exasperation in one particular case - viz., where the appeal is made not exclusively to the instinct of self-preservation, but to the conscience, on behalf of some other life besides your own, accidentally thrown upon *your* protection. To fail, to collapse in a service merely your own, might seem comparatively venial; though, in fact, it is far from venial. But to fail in a case where Providence has suddenly thrown into your hands the final interests of another - a fellow-creature shuddering between the gates of life and death; this, to a man of apprehensive conscience, would mingle the misery of an atrocious criminality with the misery of a bloody calamity. You are called upon, by the case supposed, possibly to die; but to die at the very moment when, by any even partial failure, or effeminate collapse of your energies, you will be self-denounced as a murderer. You had but the twinkling of an eye for your effort, and that effort might have been unavailing; but to have risen to the level of such an effort, would have rescued you, though not from dying, yet from dying as a traitor to your final and farewell duty.
>
> The situation here contemplated exposes a dreadful ulcer lurking far down in the depths of human nature. It is not that men generally are summoned to face such awful trials. But potentially, and in shadowy outline, such a trial is moving subterraneously in perhaps all men's natures. Upon the secret mirror of our dreams such a trial is darkly projected, perhaps, to every one of us. That dream, so familiar to childhood, of meeting a lion, and, through languishing prostration in hope and the energies of hope, that constant sequel of lying down before the lion, publishes the secret frailty of human nature - reveals its deep-seated falsehood to itself - records its abysmal treachery. Perhaps not one of us escapes that dream; perhaps, as by some sorrowful doom of man, that dream repeats for everyone of us, through every generation, the original temptation in Eden. Every one of us, in this dream, has a bait offered to the infirm places of his own individual will; once again a snare is presented for tempting him into captivity to a luxury of ruin; once again, as in aboriginal Paradise, the man falls by his own choice; again, by infinite iteration, the ancient earth groans to Heaven, through her secret caves, over the weakness of her child ... (EM-C 588-9)

In the incident De Quincey goes on to describe, that of the collision with the gig, it is clear that he sees the driver of the gig as facing such a moment of crisis. This man responds to the challenge, but is unable to save the woman travelling with him. But what about De Quincey's part in all this? Isn't he in the same case - rather aggravated by his utter helplessness (being unable to get at the reins)? It is impossible for him to do more than shout - he quite convinces us of this - but it is also plain that in his imagination he will reproach himself in spite of reason. He has been harshly woken to a sense of the Achilles heel of human helplessness - in a situation where, against reason, this helplessness seems blameable, somehow reversible by some extra effort that cannot be called up.

This is the sense of doom that hangs over the *Opium-Eater*, only rendered more poignant by all that is brisk, and reasonable, and matter-of-fact in De Quincey's attitudes. Even his loss of Ann has this element of overpowered effort woven into it - "If she lived doubtless we must have been sometimes in search of each other, at the very same moment, through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps even within a few feet of each other" (1822 O-E 381) - the human figure helpless in the overwhelming impersonal press of a crowd.

This kind of helplessness, though familiar to all human experience, must make itself felt with particular force in a person who is fighting against an enervating addiction. But here we are faced with that concept OPIUM and find that the energy of the word, as used in this book, cannot be limited to the drug itself. "For opium *is* mysterious", says De Quincey in the revised edition of the *Opium-Eater* (1856 O-E 293), and though he is speaking at that point of its medical properties, our imagination refuses to limit the meaning of the phrase in that way. There is a sense throughout the book of 'opium' as an act of Faustian hubris, though De Quincey is careful to point out that there was nothing of the kind in his reasons for actually taking the drug.

To go back to *The English Mail-Coach*: the exhilaration there, settling into terror, is due to the fact that the mail-coach is the fastest known vehicle at the

time, and so seems to teeter on the very brink of what can be humanly controlled. It is the old ambiguous human response to new technology - both fear and exhilaration - an augmented sense of helplessness coupled with a sense of diminished responsibility. We meet the complex again in Dickens's portrayal of the railway. The scholar works on similar imaginative frontiers to those of man encountering unheard-of speed - for he takes in knowledge beyond what he can easily digest and, if he is imaginative, its strangeness and glamour will turn to haunt him. 'Opium' is the strong drink of inquiry into other places and times and conditions; the strong drink of the modern world, with its vast cities, and the intoxication of the pavement-walker, as described by Benjamin in his essay on Baudelaire (WB 172-4); above all the strong drink of suffering, that leaves deeper impressions than ordinary happiness, and that De Quincey seems destined from the start to explore through his own recklessness and adventurous self-reliance:

> The main phenomenon by which opium expressed itself permanently, and the sole phenomenon that was communicable, lay in the dreams (and in the peculiar dream-scenery) which followed the opium excesses. But naturally these dreams, and this dream-scenery, drew their outlines and materials - their great lights and shadows - from those profound revelations which had been ploughed so deeply into the heart, from those *encaustic* records which in the mighty furnaces of London life had been burned into the undying memory by the fierce action of misery. And thus in reality those early experiences of erring childhood not only led to the secondary experiences of opium, but also determined the particular form and pressure of the chief phenomena in those secondary experiences. (1856 O-E 292)

9.

This last passage is quoted from the revised edition of the *Opium-Eater*. published in 1856[1]. It is superior, as an attempt to grasp the unity of the

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1. There are two considerably different versions of the *Opium-Eater*. The first was published in magazine form in 1821 and in book form in 1822; the second, revised version was published in 1856. As I have wanted to show the extent to /...

book, to any of the equivalent passages in the original version. (See p.II.6) These lack the superb, convincing sense of an interwoven unity which is also a personal destiny; the almost fierce recognition on De Quincey's part that there are various aspects which are all *his life*: a unique sensibility, a unique fate, unique dreams, all inseparably of the same weave.

In fact, this kind of unity is generally far more palpable in the revised version. I said earlier that the unity of the book lay in its portraiture of an individual by "the tracing through their different forms and manifestations of those images that for one reason or another haunt him, dog his footsteps". (See p.II.9) This would not be a perfectly true account of the first version. In that version it would be fairly easy to see the images that haunt De Quincey as haunting him only in his dreams, and these dreams as caused mechanically by his experience; not chosen by any special bent in the nature of his mind and sensibility. This is because each dream symbol is accounted for by one incident (and one only) in De Quincey's life. The crowds of his dreams are caused by his search for Ann in Oxford Street, the vision of the woman sitting on the stone by the scene of their parting, the Chinese imagery by his meeting with the Malay, the endless intricate architecture by his opium rambles through London, the vast empty rooms by memories of the house in Greek Street - all incidents in his life that one would *expect* to make an impression. There is no reason in all this to say, as I implied, that the book portrays an individual's mind by way of imagery native to it, or at any rate characteristic of its structure. Or rather there is only *one* reason, and that is the way the images complement each other, balance, seem ultimately of one piece.

But in the revised version there are far stronger reasons for making the claim. The revised version differs from the first in two important respects.

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1. (contd.) which De Quincey was a pioneer, I have so far stuck to the original version. This is also true of the quotations, which are generally from the early version, except where I have explicitly said in the text that they are not. The description of the trance at Everton (p.II.13) is the main exception to this rule.

First, it gives a fuller, and hence more credible - and also (from the point of view of understanding De Quincey) more significant - account of his reasons for leaving school. And secondly, it recounts several incidents in his life where the imagery of his dreams crops up in his writing as part of his inner response to the situation, so that it repeats itself over and over - and often occurs as metaphor *before* it occurs in fact or in dream. This knocks any mechanical idea of cause and effect into a cocked hat.

Consider how in this version De Quincey prepares the reader for the moment in which the course of his future is to be determined: his decision to run away from school.

.... in the summer of 1802, when peace was brooding over all the land, peace succeeding to a bloody seven years' war, but peace which already gave signs of breaking into a far bloodier war, some dark sympathising movement within my own heart, as if echoing and repeating in mimicry the political menaces of the earth, swept with storm-clouds across that otherwise serene and radiant dawn which should have heralded my approaching entrance into life. (1856 O-E 152)

He makes ready to leave. "Midsummer, like an army with banners, was moving through the sky." (1856 O-E 170). The effect of the last evening service he attends at school leads him to discuss the effect of biblical language on the imaginative meaning of natural things: "... suddenly the pomp and mysterious path of winds and tempests, blowing whither they list, and from what fountains no man knows, are cited from darkness and neglect, to give and to receive reciprocally an impassioned glorification, where the lower mystery enshrines and illustrates the higher." (1856 O-E 173) In the half hour before leaving, he has a waking dream. He remembers an incident two years back, when he was in London for a day with a friend. He had been in the Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's. "At the earlier end of the gallery had stood my friend, breathing in the softest of whispers a solemn but not acceptable truth. At the further end, after running along the walls of the gallery, that solemn truth reached me as a deafening menace in tempestuous uproars." (1856 O-E 177) Later he and his friend had stood

... beneath the dome ... pretty nearly on the very spot where rather more than five years subsequently Lord Nelson was buried, a spot from which we saw,

pompously floating to and from in the upper spaces of a great aisle running westwards from ourselves, many flags captured from France, Spain, and Holland - I, having my previous impressions of awe deepened by those solemn trophies of chance and change amongst mighty nations, had suddenly been surprised by a dream ... in which a thought that often had persecuted me figured triumphantly. This thought turned upon the fatality that must often attend an evil choice. (1856 O-E 176-7)

He remembers it in the form of "that great Roman warning, *Nescit vox missa reverti*" (1856 O-E 177). And now, in Manchester,

... once again that London menace broke angrily upon me as out of a thick cloud with redoubled strength; a voice, too late for warning, seemed audibly to say, 'Once leave this house, and a Rubicon is placed between thee and all possibility of return. Thou wilt not say that what thou doest is altogether approved in thy secret heart. Even now thy conscience speaks against it in sullen whispers; but at the other end of thy long life-gallery that same conscience will speak to thee in volleying thunders.' (1856 O-E 177)

What is striking in all this is not the rhetorical sententiousness, but the imagery, which we are to meet again -sullen whispers, growing to clamours, crowds, the suggestion of stormy seas, moving clouds, vast armies, historical crises, the Roman Empire, the sonorousness and solemnity of Latin words (compare the voice in the dream, 'Consul Romanus'!) (1822 O-E 421-2), vast changes felt as though they are taking place within oneself. Moreover, in this last incident the images are connected - not obviously, but memorably - with London. It is as though his later life were distinctly prefigured in the images called up unwilled by his anxiety.

I said earlier that in this 1856 version De Quincey's imagery often appears as metaphor (i.e. as part of his interpretation of scenes in his life, or as an inner response to them) before it appears in fact (i.e. as the actual concrete imagery of the scenes of his life). Moreover, one does not have the sense that the metaphors have been retrospectively foisted onto the early events; one has a sense of them as accompanying the events at the time, as being part and parcel of how these events were experienced and lived. The sense of coherence and inevitability produced by the imagery is, as I have suggested above, so compelling, that it at times produces an illusion of the mind's native imagery actually determining (or prefiguring) events - as though the original cast of De Quincey's imagination made it inevitable that he should one day experience

London. This, of course, *is* an illusion. But it is not an illusion that the autobiographer's inner life - even that part far removed from practical choice - will determine the *appearance* of his life's course: it determines his private filtering of scenes and events; his sense of which are important and how; ultimately his sense of his own life as a coherent fate. To see all this, or to make it possible for the reader to feel it, is to bring a new density into the texture of the autobiographical episode, to make it in a new and additional sense the protagonist's own.

An example of such destiny is provided by the account De Quincey gives of a night spent in an inn in Shrewsbury. Here a simple deviation from normality in his surroundings provides the stimulus for one of the most impressive moments, or stages, of De Quincey's progress through his destiny - as though by changing the usual perspectives and proportions of things, it were the key to a different (and more private) world hidden in the old. Having left Wales for London, De Quincey stops over at the inn in Shrewsbury - his last stop before reaching the city. The inn is being renovated and as a result he spends the night in a vast ballroom.

The size of the rooms triggers off something extraordinary:

> This single feature of the rooms - their unusual altitude, and the echoing hollowness which had become the exponent of that altitude - this one terrific feature (for terrific it was in the effect), together with crowding and evanescent images of the flying feet that so often had spread gladness through these halls on the wings of youth and hope at seasons when every room rang with music - all this, rising in tumultuous vision, whilst the dead hours of night were stealing along, all around me - household and town - sleeping, and whilst against the windows more and more the storm outside was raving, and to all appearance endlessly growing, threw me into the deadliest condition of nervous emotion under contradictory forces, high over which predominated horror recoiling from that unfathomed abyss in London into which I was now so wilfully precipitating myself. Often I looked out and examined the night. Wild it was beyond all description, and dark as "the inside of a wolf's throat". But at intervals, when the wind, shifting continually, swept up in such a direction as to clear away the vast curtain of vapour, the stars shone out, though with a light unusually dim and distant. Still, as I turned inwards to the echoing chambers, or outwards to the wild, wild night, I saw London expanding her visionary gates to receive me, like some dreadful mouth of Acheron ... (1856 O-E 227-8)

As readers aware of the later part of the book, the large empty ballroom will remind us of the stay at the house in Greek Street, so that we will have

the sense that De Quincey is outstripping himself and is in a special way already *in* London, *in* his future self - or that London has come out to him, to warn him. There are further echoes in the way De Quincey speaks about the storm. "For nearly two hours I had heard fierce winds arising; and the whole atmosphere had, by this time, become one vast laboratory of hostile movements in all directions." (1856 O-E 226) The storm is London, but in that case London is also De Quincey's dream country; it is De Quincey. " ... London - sole, dark, infinite - brooding over the whole capacities of my heart." (1856 O-E 227)

Taken on their own, the few pages that make up this episode work like a piece of music, weaving a complex system of relationships, echoes and references that correspond - each one - to links and relationships in De Quincey's mind-palimpsest. Taken as a moment in the book, the passage unites threads reaching from before and after and presents De Quincey's life in the form of a simultaneity. It is at this point in the book that, looking back and onward, it seems most meaningful as a work of art, a novel. Here, too, there is a balance of art and naturalness that De Quincey never attains elsewhere. What seems to be De Quincey's authorial principle in the *Opium-Eater*: "I'll simply speak about what happened to me, and I'll use art only to do that in such a way as to do justice to the way it sticks in my memory - which is not the same thing as reconstructing the story in a rational way" - this principle which allows De Quincey to stumble on new forms of expression as if by accident - is perfectly complemented by a deliberate use of symbolism which in this case (unlike in the Whispering Gallery incident) intensifies our sense of the lived moment without making it unreal.

In this full-bodied density the passage is astonishingly Dickensian. I find myself toying with the idea that it may have been at the back of Dickens's mind when he wrote certain passages in *Great Expectations* - for example the scene of Magwitch's return. This does not mean, however, that the parallel I wish to draw between De Quincey and Dickens can be regarded as due to one man learning from the other. It is more likely that we have to deal with two writers

developing similar structures along parallel lines almost independently. The 1856 *Opium-Eater's* structure (on which the density of a passage such as the Shrewsbury inn one depends) can be seen as the clarification of an obscure and confused potentiality in the 1822 version, the kind of potentiality that can only be recognized and developed by the author himself. Similarly, the short-circuit in Pip's life that he experiences when Magwitch returns is given its intensity by a use of imagery that we can see Dickens already developing at least so early as *Dombey and Son* - for instance in his treatment of the imagery that makes up Florence Dombey's experience in the Dombey home.

It is most productive, then, to see De Quincey and Dickens as writers who worked more or less independently on a project their century had rendered specially urgent and specially difficult, the reconciliation of the inner man with the outer world. When the autobiographer De Quincey depicts a man's private imagery as to a large degree the origin of what he experiences as his fate (see p.II.29), he is extending the imaginative empiry of the subject in the world - extending it from the lyrical moment to the individual's existence in time. Writing the kind of novel that is based on the autobiographical form, Dickens found similar ways of rendering meaning to the outer world, all the more easily as we may imagine that all the sensitive and imaginative of that age found the need to discover their lives as epics of inner exploration. De Quincey's and Dickens's 'method' was an extension of the Romantics' achievement from the revelation of meaning in the lyrical moment to the revelation of meaning in the identity's existence through time, though it could not on its own permeate *the world of action* with meaning. But the analysis of this degree of failure comes later, with Dickens's critique of the sicknesses arising from intense interiority. For the moment we can forget qualifications in admiration of what was achieved.

CHAPTER THREE

TRANSITIONAL

A. *Wordsworth: The Prelude*

1.

If one were to set oneself the task of searching through literature for instances of writers setting out to record not a sequence of visible events (and also not a single moment of illumination) but a sequential adventure of the soul, private and incomprehensible to all but the experiencer until his own art explains its force, one would turn first to poetry, for in our tradition it is primarily poetry that permits such abstraction from the shared material world. Dante's *Vita Nova* (being a mixture of poetry and prose) is the account of such a spiritual adventure: linked, evidently, to moments in his life, indeed taking its origin from events (which it transforms into *private* events) - and yet developing independently of the course of the world, its centre of gravity and the raison d'être of its logic unshakeably fixed in Dante's own imaginative needs. In a much less systematic way Petrarch's sonnets are (at their best) a diary of intense private experience. Chaucer's dream poems, on the other hand, represent spiritual adventures as carefully composed and as complex as Dante's, though in Chaucer the matter of personal illumination or salvation is subordinated to an interest in the actual logic of the spiritual adventure, for instance the ways in which grief, literature, and dream may act on each other in a realm outside the province of the will. The dreams of the poems are no doubt invented, but Chaucer must have been so familiar with such episodes of imaginative sleep-walking in his own experience - or so interested in them - that he was able to present the very atmosphere of them, and his 'man in black' is of the same substance as De Quincey's Malay - the substance of a figure that has become part of a private imaginative

compulsion. *The Book of the Duchess* is a fiction, but a fiction sometimes so private in spirit as to make one say: It cannot have been observed or imitated. He is telling us the things only he could know about and understand the force of. This is the type of story that only the protagonist can tell. It is autobiography.

However, it is clear that in all these examples of medieval poetry there is a factor which mitigates the degree of privacy; a factor which clearly distinguishes them in form from De Quincey's account of the spiritual adventure of his life in the *Opium-Eater*. The medieval poets' spiritual autobiographies or diaries were always a rendering of their experience *in allegorical form* - which means there was, through formalization, an extra distancing from actuality, from the literal - and also that there was a reliance on symbolic significations whose conventional meaning was accepted by a social group, however small. Beatrice as Dante meets her has much in common with the figures of special presence met by De Quincey in the early parts of the *Opium-Eater*, but Dante is able to present her in the language of courtly love, and so imply her personal significance for him by drawing on a convention; De Quincey had nothing of the kind to fall back on, and was driven to other expedients to convey the imaginative radiance of an incident for himself, while at the same time maintaining a sense of its ordinariness in the eyes of the world. The same might be said of the follow-up: the dreams and visions of the *Vita Nova* are justified by literary convention, while in the *Opium-Eater* they are the literal consequences of opium; the contents of Dante's dreams are chosen and put together according to the principles of a literary tradition, while De Quincey's accounts of his dreams at least *start* with an intention of empirical description, and thus the rules they follow reveal laws of the mind. If we really wish to find a poetic predecessor to De Quincey and Dickens, we shall have to find a poet whose method is exceptionally literal.

We find him in the Wordsworth of *The Prelude*. There Wordsworth makes the subjective aspect of experience his whole theme, showing how associations with

places and images, once they have sunk into their invisible storehouse, contine to colour a life; indicating how the inner part of a man's destiny is shaped by such associations. There is an insistence on the involuntary, particular, and *private* intensity of certain moments, of 'spots of time' that retain a 'distinct pre-eminence' in our existence. One theme of *The Prelude* is the way the imagination, independently of the will, chooses the centre of gravity of its own life.

2.

The following passage is taken from the twelfth book of *The Prelude*, a section in which Wordsworth discusses his childhood experiences, tending to theorize about them more than in the first books:

> There are in our existence spots of time,
> That with distinct pre-eminence retain
> A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
> By false opinion and contentious thought,
> Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
> In trivial occupations, and the round
> Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
> Are nourished and invisibly repaired;
> A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
> That penetrates, enables us to mount,
> When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
> This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
> Among those passages of life that give
> Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
> The mind is lord and master - outward sense
> The obedient servant of her will. (WWP XII 208 - 223)

The next passage can be paraphrased: Wordsworth, as a young boy, having barely learnt to ride, sets out on horseback with an old servant. He is separated from him, dismounts in alarm, and stumbles on a place where a murderer had once been hanged. The gibbet is now gone, but the place, with its inscription of the murderer's name, has been superstitiously bared of grass:

> The grass is cleared away, and to this hour
> The characters are fresh and visible:
> A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,
> Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road:
> Then, reascending the bare common, saw
> A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
> The beacon on the summit, and, more near,
> A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,
> And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
> Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,
> An ordinary sight; but I should need
> Colours and words that are unknown to man,
> To paint the visionary dreariness
> Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
> Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,
> The beacon crowning the lone eminence,
> The female and her garments vexed and tossed
> By the strong wind. (WWP XII 244-261)

Wordsworth goes on to describe how, when he later returns to the spot with a lover, his pleasure at seeing it in this new context is intensified by the earlier experience, even though one might have expected the two kinds of vision to work against each other.

Wordsworth, then, is interested in the after-life of the incident, in the effect that the memory continues to have on his later life. That the scene should have this kind of importance means that we can link it with those scenes in the *Opium-Eater* which leave a lasting residue in De Quincey's mind: a residue that actively mingles with new experience.

Now the figures appearing in these scenes - for instance, the woman De Quincey meets beside the Cop, just before the flood - remain in our own minds with a certain luminosity of their own (not unlike the luminosity of woman, beacon and pool in the Wordsworth passage). Their radiance is given them partly by their structural function, their position in a system of imaginative echoes. For instance, it is reasonable to say that De Quincey's experience beside the Cop lays the foundation for his dreams of water. However, it is part of the writer's business to make these scenes' significance (as the originators of haunting imagery) plain to the reader even at the moment of their first presentation. To invest the ordinary scene with the luminosity that it derives, for the experiencer, from its importance in the private world of his imagination,

the writer is required to make use of a specially inventive rhetoric of presentation in his treatment of it.

Often the effectiveness of the presentation depends on the incident's being clothed in an atmosphere of unease (which may be as tenuous as even slight social embarassment). Let us take the incident beside the Cop as an example. One of the peculiar things about this scene is that we remember the woman approaching De Quincey along the river-bank as distinctly as the 'event proper' - the flood-wave rushing towards him immediately after - and accord her as much importance. This is due to the way our attention is focussed upon her.

In the structure of the book the flood-wave of the Cop, like the echoing rooms at Shrewsbury, serves to pre-figure the quality of De Quincey's later life - it comes as a 'sign'. So in describing the approach of the woman, De Quincey has his opportunity to prepare the reader for accepting the world as a place where 'signs' are given, and one of the ways he gives notice lies in the particular, just slightly unconventional, scrutiny he describes himself as giving the stranger approaching him. He is wondering whether he can entrust her with a commission which would be a trivial one for her, but is an awkwardly important one for him - even just this imbalance is sufficient to create a sense of unease.

The only slightly too pointed scrutiny continues, and this chance attentiveness is responsible for the intensity of surprise and horror when he sees her face change:

> This woman might be a quarter of a mile distant, and was steadily advancing toward me - face to face. Soon, therefore, I was beginning to read the character of her features pretty distinctly; and her countenance naturally served as a mirror to echo and reverberate my own feelings, consequently my own horror ... (1856 O-E 185-6)

This is the point at which the 'event proper' - the arrival of the wave - breaks in on them. The interesting feature here is the devious route by which De Quincey becomes aware of his own fear. The point is that the wave is approaching from behind the woman, so that he becomes aware of it before her. But the way things are put tends to create the illusion that he is aware of the changes in her features before he is aware of the wave, which is logically impossible.

He reads fear in her face. But this fear after all merely mirrors the changes, the fear, that she reads off his own face - for he can see the wave (though he has not yet told us that) while she can be aware of no more than a confused and incomprehensible noise.

The devious route by which the perception of danger is presented as reaching De Quincey is a stroke of genius on his part - first of all because it mimics so well the actual nature of panic or shock: its delays, its partial anaesthesias, its displacements. Equally important, however, is the way the bafflement, diversion, bifurcation to which the perception of danger has been submitted prevents the aspect of practical danger and escape from danger from dominating the episode to the exclusion of all else - as it must certainly have done otherwise. Because the direct location of the danger and the alarm has been disturbed and obscured, they communicate themselves to all the impressions participating in the scene. And for De Quincey the incident will not merely be 'the time he narrowly escaped drowning', but a time when, among other things, something of the imaginative essence of water was revealed to him.

Now the disquiet that lends a special power of disturbance to what Wordsworth sees in the passage from *The Prelude* is more tangible than that under which De Quincey is suffering as the woman approaches him along the side of the Cop (which brings it closer to that felt by Pip before Magwitch's appearance at the beginning of *Great Expectations*): it comes from the feeling of being lost, which is intensified by the shock of stumbling on the old place of execution[1].

> A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,
> Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road:
> Then, reascending the bare common, saw ...

Wordsworth surfaces into an 'unprepared' world of bare existences.

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1. It is hard not to speculate that the razed gibbet in Wordsworth may have been the ancestor of the still standing but disused old gibbet in the first chapter of Dickens's novel.

What he sees reminds us of those pictures so stripped of prettiness and surface harmony that they reveal the world in its effort of constructing itself, making us aware of laws of life that are normally forgotten in the habitual: pressures of gravity, strains, and tensions that are deeply embedded in things, holding them together or threatening to tear them apart. Compare what John Berger has to say about Cubist paintings:

> The Cubists created a system by which they could reveal visually the interlocking of phenomena. And thus they created the possibility in art of revealing *processes* instead of static states of being. Cubism is an art entirely concerned with interaction: the interaction between different aspects; the interaction between structure and movement; the interaction between solids and the space around them; the interaction between the unambiguous signs made on the surface of the picture and the changing reality which they stand in for. (JB 59-60)

The world that Wordsworth surfaces into is a still world, even a frozen world, but this immobility holds visibly in itself the movement and process of the universe as an exertion of different kinds of force on a few isolated and emerging existences. The pitcher on the woman's head drives a force of verticality down through her body into the earth. In a quite different way, she and her clothes suffer the wind. Beside "The beacon crowning the lone eminence", the blurred[1] and restless image of "The female and her garments vexed and tossed/ By the strong wind" can be registered as representing a still more advanced stage of Wordsworth's vision: the image reminds one of the accounts given by users of LSD, who claim that other people's faces appear to them as having the coherence not of a disc or solid, but of a swarm of bees: a unity precariously maintained in a double process of formation and disintegration. Again, the phrasing of "And seemed with difficult steps to force her way/ Against the blowing wind" - particularly the inspired combination of "difficult steps" - seems to reveal the effort of her battling against the wind (an effort which later becomes equally attributable to her clothes) as a labour more fundamental than that of her specific task of

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1. I call it blurred because the still centre of the woman's body (emphasized by the pitcher) is surrounded by the moving play of her less solid garments.

movement: a labour of stating, of asserting, an existence in a void that life lives next door to. And Wordsworth's voice, too, from "but I should need ..." battles out against a steady pressure that hones its rhythms and colours to those of an equally steady, immensely powerful, assertion - a "visionary dreariness" of movement that is sublime and unforgettable, irremovable.

Going back seven lines, the burst into a silent and almost-empty world which follows on the end-placed "saw ..." is a new vision determined by absence - the immediate absence being that of the guide Wordsworth is searching for. The scene sinks into the boy's mind while his attention is fixed on something that is not there, and the emptiness that greets him determines his vision, in which the few objects that *are* there appear bare and essential: the "naked pool", following water's nature to be at the bottom of the world, lies beneath the hills, and the beacon, as all beacons should, crowns the lone eminence. The three presences in the scene, pool, beacon, and woman, however isolated from one another, form a topological web of top and bottom and near and far in which a fundamental kind of reality - which for Wordsworth would also be a reality of imaginative perception - is held suspended between the poles. In this Pip's haunting by configurations (topological patterns, maps) of imagery seems pre-figured.

B. *David Copperfield*

3.

The purpose of the three sections of this chapter is to show other instances of 'the private adventure of the imagination' in the nineteenth century. In no case is the phenomenon *the same* as it is in the *Opium-Eater*,

and this means we can extend our sense of the possibilities the approach opens up for the narrative writer, thus preparing ourselves for Dickens's exceptionally broad and integrated use of it in *Great Expectations*. It has already become clear that the approach is specially linked to autobiography, and this is why we should expect it to be most prominently developed in the two novels which Dickens presents in the form of fictional autobiographies: *Great Expectations* is one of them, but we should also have a look, if only briefly, at *David Copperfield*.

David Copperfield, like *Great Expectations*, shows how a man's fate can be influenced, and even dominated, by a private imaginative dynamic that has to a large extent made itself free from the constant interaction and mutual correction between world and spirit which would permit a balanced appraisal of the world, and balanced decisions. The two novels differ in that *Great Expectations* is concerned with the effects of trauma, and so circles around an emotion and its remembered circumstances; *David Copperfield*, on the other hand is trapped by archetypal spiritual needs that can only be filled by people. *Great Expectations* is cyclical in throwing up, again and again, the same imagery - somewhat altered, somewhat worked on, undergoing gradual change. The cycle of *David Copperfield* is the cycle of characters recurring, of old acquaintances re-entering David's life, giving him always a new opportunity to come to terms with them and with his own emotional helplessness with regard to them.

The power of the book's characters over David rests not so much in themselves as in an unconscious archetypal appeal they make to his emotions or imagination. Which women he will fall in love with is determined by what he has had and lost in his mother, by what he has missed in her, by the needs she has left him with. This may be seen as the temporal, narrative axis of Dickens's exploration. On another axis Dickens examines concepts - that of motherhood, for instance - by complementation, by giving David more than one mother: Mrs. Copperfield herself, Pegotty, and Betsy Trotwood. But this exploration is not merely intellectual, an analysis of what, in practical terms,

a mother ought to be; Dickens is also shadowing forth the lineaments of an unconscious expectation and constructing a composite archetype: his poetic problem in *Copperfield* is to make us feel the presence of the archetypal in the texture of lived reality. Because he succeeds, we have the wonderful emotional completeness of *David Copperfield*, its power to suggest how life is charged with a mysterious meaningfulness that transcends what can be understood by the actors in it.

4.

I wish to give one example here of Dickens's procedure in *Copperfield*, an example the more convenient as it sets up echoes both in the Wordsworth passage discussed and in certain passages to be met in *Great Expectations*. The example is David's last glimpse of his mother. The passage I quote comes at the end of a chapter, and the next chapter will begin with his hearing the news of his mother's death.

> I kissed her, and my baby brother, and was very sorry then; but not sorry to go away, for the gulf between us was there, and the parting was there, every day. And it is not so much the embrace she gave me, that lives in my mind, though it was as fervent as could be, as what followed the embrace.
>
> I was in the carrier's cart when I heard her calling to me. I looked out, and she stood at the garden-gate alone, holding her baby up in her arms for me to see. It was cold still weather; and not a hair of her head, nor a fold of her dress, was stirred, as she looked intently at me, holding up her child.
>
> So I lost her. So I saw her afterwards, in my sleep at school - a silent presence near my bed - looking at me with the same intent face - holding up her baby in her arms. (DC 8, 125)

In describing David's mother, Dickens gains much the same effect as Wordsworth did by superficially opposite means. He suggests an intensity of vision and so a richness of significance through the immobility of his figure

under David's gaze, while Wordsworth's wind-buffeted woman had become a vision of self-affirming energy through the movement, and through our being made aware of the muscular energy in the stance of her body and (by transference) in "her garments vexed and tossed/ By the strong wind". Dickens's mysterious mother-figure is motionless, we feel, by virtue of its attentiveness, which is part of its especial reality - its own assertion of its reality. "Not a hair of her head, nor a fold of her dress, was stirred" - and this motionlessness communicates itself on through the sentence to the mother's eyes - their intent look, which is at one with her silent gesture: "holding her baby up in her arms for me to see". The stillness of the figure is something determined by David's mother's state of mind, and by David's way of seeing her - if there had been a breeze, can we say for certain that it would have been able to stir her clothes and hair? The "cold still weather" serves rather to suggest a pause in nature, which permits the timeless significance of what David's mother is conveying to him.

From another point of view, the stillness of the vision is so much a part of its intensity because it prepares it for direct translation into memory - the only kind of memory of his mother that David could have which is entirely free of a special kind of pain. David's love for his mother can't live for him in his understanding of her as an acting person, because this kind of understanding must include her betrayal of him - too painful a consideration for a boy to be able to cope with it. David's love for his mother, once she has gone, can only fasten itself to isolated images:

> From the moment of my knowing of the death of my mother, the idea of her as she had been of late had vanished from me. I remembered her, from that instant, only as the young mother of my earliest impressions, who had been used to wind the bright curls round and round her finger, and to dance with me at twilight in the parlour. What Pegotty had told me now, was so far from bringing me back to the later period, that it rooted the earlier image in my mind. It may be curious, but it is true. In her death she winged her way back to her calm untroubled youth, and cancelled all the rest.
>
> The mother who lay in the grave, was the mother of my infancy; the little creature in her arms, was myself, as I had once been, hushed for ever on her bosom. (DC 9, 136)

These memories poignantly render a part of what David's mother had meant to him, but it is a limited part, and the memory-trace left by the scene at the garden gate is far more significant - the mother standing, the baby held in the mother's arms but at the same time proffered to the world: "holding her baby up in her arms for me to see" - the whole arrangement showing a strength in Mrs. Copperfield that we had not known existed:

> So I lost her. So I saw her afterwards, in my sleep at school - a silent presence near my bed - looking at me with the same intent face - holding up her baby in her arms.

We do not even know whether what David sees as the cart drives off is real or not. Is this David's mother herself or her telepathic image, her Doppelgänger?[1] The apparition is strange enough for anything. Actually the degree of reality makes little difference. Either David's mother has managed to evade the Murdstones and come out to the gate to give David a proper farewell in defiance of their orders - or she has sent her telepathic image (through what wildernesses of torment by their associated demons that have such power over her mind we can only guess) - sent it to give him her greeting, and remind him of what subsists between them. In either case - what fierceness of maternal determination!

To see David's mother looking 'intent' is surprise enough. Can it really be that this vague, vain, weak woman is at this moment experiencing a focus ing of all her feelings? That they have concentrated into an awareness of the ultimate bond between her and David? That she knows she has neglected this bond and that she is now helpless to repair the damage? And that this consciousness has led her to make a last expression of what she now knows has been between them - and she does this with a look of love that is not childish or playful, but hard and primitive and courage-giving? When she holds up the child in her arms for David to see, that child is David as he was. She is expressing the timeless aspect of her relation to him. So it becomes the

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1. David's last glimpse of his mother has much in common with Pip's vision of Miss Havisham hanging from the beam in *Great Expectations* (see pp IV.14-17 and also and especially pp IV.30-33) (Contd. III.13)

"silent presence" that remains beside David's bed. It cannot be a warm and comforting presence. It is more profound, if less comfortable, and expresses a courage that can transmit itself to the boy, who is going to need it.

C. *E.T.A. Hoffmann: The Sandman*

5.

There is a certain pattern which recurs again and again in the stories of the German romantic, E.T.A. Hoffman. The hero, a young man of a sensitive disposition, well-meaning but mildly clumsy in society, conscientiously pursues his vocation, which is thoroughly philistine and ordinary. Suddenly he is startled by some event or visitation that reveals to him a magical world hidden within the old and plunges him into enchantment. He grows strange, commits the most embarassing faux pas, neglects or abandons his betrothed (of course the magical world has, by this time, provided its own female competitor); both his detractors and his loved ones are certain that he has gone mad - no matter, he himself believes that he has uncovered his true destiny and that it is irresistible. Irresistible, that is, whenever the spell is upon him; at other times he is trapped in a ghastly conflict, torn between the cold but reassuring rationality of his old world and the dangerous poetry of the new. The story has a variety of conclusions: in one version he remains faithful to the magical world he has entered and prospers within it after many trials; in another he is unable to commit himself heart and soul to the

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1.(Contd. from III.12)
Both incidents take place immediately after the boy has parted from the woman, and might have considered that the pain of the connection could be laid aside for a while; but it is as if the late encounter had 'had an afterthought' and, unwilling to forgo it, had pursued him to present it anyway. In each case, the woman, or her apparition, makes an intense and direct appeal to the boy. Both cases serve to make the boy aware of aspects of his relationship with the woman that he had not been aware of in her presence. Both are cases of having-understood-more-than-one-knew.

magical world, and in revenge it encompasses his destruction; in a third he is destroyed by his very besottedness with its seduction. But always there are the two worlds, the philistine world of the small town and the unpredictable world of magic; never are the claims of the two worlds to be reconciled.

Hoffmann is, of course, creating fantastic parables to depict the turning-point of his own life. His history was a typical one for the romantic writers of his generation: he went to university to study law and became instead obsessed by literature and music. The magic world that appears in the stories is his way of representing his entry into the world of the artistic imagination. We may have some doubts as to how seriously we can take such a treatment of the imagination, especially when the magic appears in the meretricious (if highly entertaining) form of a work like *The Golden Pot* - which simply must be the hippy novella of all time. But it is a different matter when Hoffmann draws on his feeling for folk superstition as in *The Mines of Falun*, or reveals (as in the same story) that his real concern in such a fairy-tale is one with that of the more profound of his contemporaries, who also used the blanket term of magic to describe their art: a concern with the power of the imagination to make nature speak to it, and reciprocally the power of nature to seduce and entrance. It is true that when it came to defining the nature of imaginative experience he did not have the skill in evocation of the lyrical poets of his generation, and was forced to rely on the extravagant and the grotesque to make his point. His powers were those of the story-teller, and his interest for us lies in his portrayal of how people may be gripped by an imaginative compulsion that in some way always enriches their emotional life, while at the same time it alienates them from the social world they need to function in.

The entry into an imaginative life is, in these stories, a sudden one, the product of an encounter that wields an inexplicable power over the hero. This incident which affects him so much speaks only to him. And he has the sense of having found his true destiny - or perhaps it is more true to his feeling, and the writer's, to say that his destiny has found *him* out, making

the first move from out of a world of lurking powers and potential signs.

Take the case of Traugott in *The Artushof*. He is working as secretary to a merchant in an old hall (the Artushof of the title) which is being used as a merchants' exchange. The walls are decorated with old German reliefs and paintings, and he is writing a letter when he lifts his eyes and they are held by two of the figures on the wall: a stern, somewhat sinister man with a tangled black beard, and a beautiful androgynous youth. At that moment someone claps him on the shoulder, he turns round, and he sees the two figures, in modern dress, standing in the flesh behind him. He is thrown into a kind of trance, waking to find his employer in a fury: instead of the business letter he believes he has written, Traugott has unconsciously sketched excellent portraits of the two men.

Hoffmann's own - playful - explanation of what happens to Traugott bears a certain relation to Proust's sense that the world contains certain possible sensations scattered through it, sensations capable of liberating him from time, but which he can only stumble on by chance. Here is Hoffmann's metaphor in *The Artushof*:

Jener Professor physices meinte, der Weltgeist habe als ein wackrer Experimentalist irgendwo eine tüchtige Elektrisiermaschine gebaut, und von ihr aus liefen gar geheimnisvolle Drähte durchs Leben, die umschlichen and umgingen wir nun bestmöglichst, aber in irgendeinem Moment müssten wir darauf treten, und Blitz und Schlag führen durch unser Inneres, in dem sich nun plötzlich alles anders gestalte. Auf den Draht war wohl Traugott getreten in dem Moment als er bewusstlos die zeichnete, welche lebendig hinter ihm standen, denn mit Blitzesgewalt hatte ihn die seltsame Erscheinung der Fremden durchzuckt, und es war ihm, als wisse er nun alles deutlich, was sonst nur Ahnung und Traum gewesen. (ETAH 213)

(A certain professor of physics suggested that the world spirit in its capacity of conscientious experimental scientist had built somewhere a powerful electrical dynamo, and that taking their origins from this dynamo mysterious wirings run through life; we do our best to evade and go round them, but we need only at any moment tread on them and shock and lightning would pass through our inner selves, in which, now, everything would need to order itself differently. Traugott must have trodden on such a wire at that moment when he unconsciously drew those figures which were standing in the flesh behind him, for the wonderful appearance of the strangers had shot through him like lightning, and it seemed to him that he now knew all those things clearly which had before been but intuition and dream. (My translation).)

This particular passage does not, of course, suggest the specially individual and private significance of the signs and powers hidden in the world (as Proust's theory does). Nevertheless, it is plain elsewhere that Traugott's imaginative destiny is unleashed by communications that are meaningful for him alone: the appearance of the two strangers makes him conscious for the first time of how the wall-painting - and particularly those two figures in it - has always had the power to fascinate him, how it has already drawn his eyes many a time, and held him in a trance-like dream.

In this case we are dealing with a very light-weight story; I should like now to turn to a more disturbing work of Hoffmann's: *The Sandman* . Here there is no hint of an artistic calling being revealed to the hero; the story's intense interest for us lies in the way an account of traumatic experience (breaking out later in the form of neurosis) is fused with the kind of pattern we have been considering, a pattern associated with the awakening of the imagination and its consequences.

6.

The decisive events of *The Sandman* have taken place before the story begins. The hero, Nathanael, appears to have mastered them; he has said nothing of them to Clara, his beloved, or to her family; we may assume that he has not thought about them for many years. But now something has happened to revive the memory and to throw him into a past state of mind - "Something terrible has invaded my life!" (ETAHT 91 - 3) - and to explain his turmoil he recounts elements of his childhood in a letter to Clara's brother:

Ausser dem Mittagessen sahen wir, ich und meine Geschwister, tagsüber den Vater wenig. Er mochte mit seinem Dienst viel beschäftigt sein. Nach dem Abendessen, das alter Sitte gemäss schon um sieben Uhr aufgetragen wurde, gingen wir alle, die Mutter mit uns, in des Vaters Arbeitszimmer und setzten uns um einen runden Tisch. Der Vater rauchte Tabak und trank ein grosses Glas Bier dazu. Oft erzählte er uns viele wunderbare Geschichten und geriet darüber so in Eifer, dass ihm die Pfeife immer ausging, die ich, ihm brennend Papier hinhaltend, wieder anzünden musste, welches mir denn ein Hauptspass war. Oft gab er uns aber Bilderbücher in die Hände, sass stumm und starr in seinem Lehnstuhl und blies starke Dampfwolken von sich, dass wir alle wie im Nebel schwammen. An solchen Abenden war die Mutter sehr traurig, und kaum schlug die Uhr neun, so sprach sie: "Nun, Kinder - zu Bette! zu Bette! Der Sandmann kommt, ich merk' es schon." Wirklich hörte ich dann jedesmal etwas schweren, langsamen Tritts die Treppe heraufpoltern; das musste der Sandmann sein. Einmal war mir jenes dumpfe Treten und Poltern besonders graulich; ich frug die Mutter, indem sie uns fortführte: "Ei, Mama, wer ist denn der böse Sandmann, der uns immer von Papa forttreibt? - Wie sieht er denn aus?" "Es gibt keinen Sandmann, mein liebes Kind," erwiderte die Mutter, "wenn ich sage, der Sandmann kommt, so will das nur heissen, ihr seid schläfrig und könnt die Augen nicht offen behalten, als hätte man euch Sand hineingestreut". - Der Mutter Antwort befriedigte mich nicht, ja in meinem kindischen Gemüt entfaltete sich deutlich der Gedanke, dass die Mutter den Sandmann nur verleugne, damit wir uns vor ihm nicht fürchten sollten, ich hörte ihn ja immer die Treppe heraufkommen. Voll Neugierde, Näheres von diesem Sandmann und seiner Beziehung auf uns Kinder zu erfahren, frug ich endlich die alte Frau, die meine jüngste Schwester wartete, was denn das für ein Mann sei, der Sandmann. "Ei, Thanelchen," erwiderte diese, "Weisst du das noch nicht? Das ist ein böser Mann, der kommt zu den Kindern, wenn sie nicht zu Bett gehen wollen, und wirft ihnen Hände voll Sand in die Augen, dass sie blutig zum Kopf herausspringen, die wirft er dann in den Sack und trägt sie in den Halbmond zur Atzung fur seine Kinderchen; die sitzen dort im Nest und haben krumme Schnäbel, wie die Eulen, damit picken sie der unartigen Menschenkindlein Augen auf." - Grässlich malte sich nun im Innern mir das Bild des grausamen Sandmanns aus; sowie es abends die Treppe heraufpolterte. zitterte ich vor Angst und Entsetzen. Nichts als den unter Tränen hergestotterten Ruf: "Der Sandmann, der Sandmann!" konnte die Mutter aus mir herausbringen. Ich lief darauf in das Schlafzimmer, und wohl die ganze Nacht über quälte mich die fürchterliche Erscheinung des Sandmanns. (ETAH 82-3)

(In those years my sister and I hardly ever saw our father except at meals. His business seemed to engross all his energies. But after supper every evening we used to go with our mother and sit about a round table in his study. My father would light his pipe, fill a huge beer glass to the brim, and tell us a host of marvellous tales, during which his pipe would go out, to my great joy, for it was my job to light it again each time. Often when he was in a less expansive mood he would let us have fine books full of marvellous engravings; while we were eagerly poring over their treasures of illustration he would lie back in his big oak arm-chair and puff hard at his pipe till he disappeared in a thick fog of smoke. On those evenings my mother was sad, and when the clock struck nine, "Come now," she would say, "off to bed with you quickly, here comes the *Sandman*!" And thereupon I would indeed hear a noise of heavy steps on the stair - they must be the mysterious sandman's.

One night this fantastic sound had frightened me more than usual; I asked my mother who was this nasty person she threatened us with, and who was always driving us away from our father's room. "There is no sandman, my dear boy," replied my mother; "when I say 'here's the sandman!' it only means you are sleepy and keep shutting your eyes as if somebody had thrown sand in them."

My mother's answer failed to satisfy me, and my childish mind was convinced that she only denied the sandman's existence to prevent us from being afraid of him, for I still could hear him mounting the stairs. Eager and curious to learn something more definite about this sandman and his connexion with us children, I finally asked the old woman who had charge of my little sister who he was. "Ah, Thanelchen," she said, "don't you know that yet? He is a bad man who comes for children when they refuse to go to bed; he throws big handfuls of sand in their eyes, then he bundles them into a bag and carries them off to the moon for his young ones to eat. They have hooky beaks, like owls, to eat the eyes of children who don't behave themselves."

From that moment the image of the cruel sandman was imprinted upon my mind under a horrible guise. When in the evening I heard the noise he made coming up the stairs I shivered with terror. My mother could get nothing out of me but the cry I stammered through my sobs - "the sandman, the sandman!" I would rush away for refuge to the bedroom, and all night through I would be tormented by the dreadful apparition. (ETAHT 93-4)

The weaving together of elements to make up Nathanael's image of 'the sandman' is quite masterly. It was a stroke of genius to take a specially harmless piece of nursery lore and show a child in the process of linking it to a presence in his world that - like the presence of the stomping man in the household at the exact moment the sandman is mentioned - has remained unexplained and is thus felt as a vague, shadowy threat. The boy's suspicion that his mother "only denied the sandman's existence to prevent us from being afraid of him" is by no means unintelligent, for it shows his perception of her anxiety and grief, which are precisely what she wishes to hide. It becomes clear later that the anxiety pertains to her husband's involvement in alchemy and to the power that his mysterious partner has gained over him. As in the beginning of *Great Expectations* we are given from within the situation of an intelligent and sensitive child, quite methodically setting out to explain to himself circumstances that concern him and those near him, and coming up with all sorts of confused conclusions simply because, as a child, he is deprived of the necessary data, and supplied instead with material intended to distract him. When, like Pip asking about the hulks, he applies for further information to his sister's nurse, he receives a reply that is a rebuff justifying itself as 'upbringing' and it strengthens the mental torment that the matter holds for him. The nurse's reply, incidentally, also serves Hoffmann's purposes by introducing, unforgettably, the concern with 'eyes' which becomes a leitmotiv

of the story.

Interestingly, Hoffmann shows that 'the sandman' is not unconnected with a certain kind of pleasure, or at least fascination, which helps to keep his image alive:

Der Sandmann hatte mich auf die Bahn des Wunderbaren, Abenteuerlichen gebracht, das so schon leicht im kindlichen Gemüt sich einnistet. Nichts war mir lieber, als schauerliche Geschichten von Kobolden, Hexen, Däumlingen usw. zu hören oder zu lesen; aber obenan stand immer der Sandmann, den ich in den seltsamsten, abscheulichsten Gestalten überall auf Tische, Schränke und Wände mit Kreide, Kohle hinzeichnete. (ETAH 83)

(The sandman had transported me into the realm of the marvellous, the fantastic, the idea of which sprouts so easily in children's minds. Nothing pleased me more than to hear or read tales about spirits, about witches, about dwarfs; but over everything there hovered the sandman, whom I used to draw with chalk or charcoal on the tables, on the cupboard doors, on the walls, in the strangest and most horrible shapes. (ETAHT 95))

Eventually the boy plucks up courage to hide away in his father's room so as to see the sandman. The stranger arrives and reveals himself as the old lawyer Coppelius, a familiar figure but by no means reassuring, as he is feared by the boy not only for the romantic grotesque of his face, which is full of wild energy and totally justifies the nurse's account of the sandman and his greedy brood, but also for his malice - he makes a habit of spoiling the children's food for them by deliberately touching it with his repulsive fingers before they can eat it. The men set to work:

Ach Gott - wie sich nun mein alter Vater zum Feuer herabbückte, da sah er ganz anders aus. Ein grässlicher krampfhafter Schmerz schien seine sanften ehrlichen Züge zum hässlichen widerwärtigen Teufelsbilde verzogen zu haben. Er sah dem Coppelius ähnlich. Dieser schwang die glutrote Zange und holte damit hellblinkende Massen aus dem dicken Qualm, die er dann emsig hämmerte. Mir war es, als würden Menschengesichter ringsumher sichtbar, aber ohne Augen - scheussliche, tiefe schwarze Höhlen statt ihrer. "Augen her, Augen her!" rief Coppelius mit dumpfer dröhnender Stimme. Ich kreischte auf, von wildem Entsetzen gewaltig erfasst, und stürzte aus meinem Versteck heraus auf den Boden. Da ergriff mich Coppelius. - "Kleine Bestie! - Kleine Bestie!" meckerte er zähnefletschend - riss mich auf und warf mich auf den Herd, dass die Flamme mein Haar zu sengen begann: "Nun haben wir Augen - Augen - ein schön Paar Kinderaugen." So flüsterte Coppelius und griff mit den Fäusten glutrote Körner aus der Flamme, die er mir in die Augen streuen wollte. Da hob mein Vater flehend die Hände empor und rief: "Meister! Meister! Lass meinem Nathanael die Augen - lass sie ihm!" Coppelius lachte gellend auf und rief: "Mag denn der Junge die Augen behalten und sein Pensum flennen in der Welt; aber nun wollen wir doch den Mechanismus der Hände und der Füsse recht observieren." Und damit fasste er mich gewaltig, dass die Gelenke knackten, und

schrob mir die Hände ab und die Füsse und setzte sie bald hier, bald dort wieder ein. "'s steht doch überall nicht recht! 's gut, so wie es war! - Der Alte hat's verstanden!" So zischte und lispelte Coppelius; aber alles um mich her wurde schwarz und finster, ein jäher Krampf durchzuckte Nerv und Gebein - ich fühlte nichts mehr. Ein sanfter warmer Hauch glitt über mein Gesicht, ich erwachte wie aus dem Todesschlaf, die Mutter hatte sich über mich hingebeugt. (ETAH 86)

(When my father bent over the crucible on the fire, his face all at once took on a strange expression; his features, contracted with some violent inner pang, had something of the hateful mask of Coppelius. The latter was puddling in the burning mass with tongs, and he drew out ingots of metal and hammered them on the anvil. I imagined I saw human heads leaping all round him, but eyeless. "Eyes! eyes!" roared Coppelius. I heard no more; I was so agitated that I began to lose consciousness and tumbled out on the floor. The noise of my downfall made my father start, while Coppelius leapt upon me and picked me up, gnashing his teeth, and held me above the flames of the stove, which were already beginning to scorch my hair. "Ah! here are eyes, child's eyes!" cried Coppelius, raking red-hot coals out of the fire and making to put them on my eyelids. My father struggled to stop him. "Master! Master!" he cried, "leave my Nathanael his eyes!" "Be it so," said Coppelius, "then I shall study the mechanism of his feet and his hands." He then began to twist and turn my joints so rudely that they all felt as though they were dislocated. Then everything went black and silent about me, and I ceased to feel anything. When I came out of this second fainting fit, my mother's gentle breath was warming my frozen lips. (ETAHT 98))

The scene has, of course, all the ingredients of a nightmare memory long hidden in the mind and so having developed in its own way. We can no longer separate what actually happened from what is Nathanael's fantasy, influenced by the expectations he has of his sandman. And indeed the only reality we can be certain of from this point on is the kind of reality presented to Nathanael by his obsession, which has gone too far and is too powerful in its own kind of coherence for it to be modified by his or anyone else's judgement.

One would think that the last episode would have been enough as a justification of trauma, but Hoffman carries things further, and perhaps overdoes it. Nathanael's father closets himself with Coppelius for what he swears to his wife is to be the last time; there is an explosion; the father's body is found dead and mutilated; Coppelius vanishes.

The story begins, as I have said, with the *revival* of these memories. A man called Coppola has appeared at Nathanael's door selling barometers; Nathanael recognizes the features of Coppelius, and throws him out. But he feels he has

become embroiled in "some dreadful impending fate" (ETAHT 93).

Nathanael is temporarily reassured by a certain Professor Spalanzani that Coppola cannot be Coppelius. With this Hoffmann creates an uncertainty in the mind of his readers that he would have done well to maintain to the end. As it turns out, Coppola is indeed Coppelius, and Spalanzani his accomplice. It would however have been better to maintain the possibility that Nathanael's obsessions had led him to mistake resemblance for identity. After all it is not important that Coppelius himself should have re-entered Nathanael's life; the important point is that *the sandman* has re-entered it. And at this point we *are* still uncertain; we are inclined to accept Clara's view, which, it should be noted, does not deny the sandman's fatefulness:

> Nur dann, wenn Nathanael bewies, dass Coppelius das böse Prinzip sei, was ihn in dem Augenblick erfasst habe, als er hinter dem Vorhange lauschte, und dass dieser widerwärtige Dämon auf entsetzliche Weise ihr Liebesglück stören werde, da wurde Klara sehr ernst und sprach: "Ja, Nathanael! Du hast recht, Coppelius ist ein böses, feindliches Prinzip, er kann Entsetzliches wirken wie eine teuflische Macht, die sichtbarlich in das Leben trat, aber nur dann, wenn du ihn nicht aus Sinn und Gedanken verbannst. Solange du an ihn glaubst, ist er auch und wirkt, nur dein Glaube ist seine Macht." (ETAH 96)
> (One day when Nathanael was complaining very seriously that the monster Coppelius was the evil principle that had fastened upon him from the moment he had hidden behind a curtain to watch him, and that his demon antagonist would poison their happy love, Clara suddenly became serious, and said, "Yes, Nathanael, Coppelius is a hostile principle that will trouble our happiness if you do not banish him from your mind: his power lies only in your credulity." (ETAHT 106))

The rest of the story is of less interest to us: Coppola-Coppelius revisits Nathanael, telling him: "I have not only barometers, I have also eyes, lovely eyes!" and spreading out his store of spectacles, on which Nathanael attacks him bodily. A moment later he repents, however, and to set things right buys a lorgnette. He gazes through this at a young girl of placid beauty who is seated at Professor Spalanzani's window, and is thrown into a long trance by her appearance. This beauty-at-the-window, who is called Olympia, and whom he falls in love with, turns out to be a clockwork doll made by Coppelius and Spalanzani in partnership - a strange shift on Hoffmann's part from the medieval golems of the earlier scene (in Nathanael's

father's room) to a robot worthy of the enlightenment. Follows much indecision on Nathanael's part between Clara and Olympia; the destruction of Olympia who is torn in two during a quarrel between Coppelius and Spalanzani; reconciliations; Clara and Nathanael up on the tower, admiring the scenery; Nathanael looking through the lorgnette, seeing Olympia; grabbing Clara, shouting "Mannequin! Mannequin from hell! ... go back to the devil that created you!" (ETAHT 119-20), trying to throw her over the edge; her rescue ... Coppelius joins the crowd below; Nathanael catches sight of him; with a yell of diabolical laughter he throws himself headlong.

So much for *The Sandman*. Its depiction of a haunting by the image of a fearful and repulsive man, its weaving of the image in the vulnerable consciousness of a child, its sense of an obsession so intensely of its moment as to be trapped in that kind of helpless consciousness, so that a return of the stimulus brings back also the vulnerable state of mind, its use of imagery (such as the 'eyes') recurring in different forms as a thread running through the hero's life (like the leg-iron through Pip's life), the pattern of suppression and return, the sense the work gives of an imaginative destiny - all make it into a fantastic exaggeration (or even caricature) of *Great Expectations* - a parody written forty-six years in advance.

CHARLES DICKENS AND THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE IMAGINATION

SECTION TWO:

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SATIS HOUSE THEME

1.

The structural backbone of *Great Expectations* is its plot, the linear plot of the traditional novel, a succession of events linked in a network of cause and effect. Such a network of causality is of course not mechanical, but complex and dialectical. The protagonist *acts*: that is, he attempts to realize his hopes, his ambitions, his principles and his ideals *in the world* - i.e. in a substance which is to a large extent alien to them, and certainly does not allow them the freedom and unaccountability that they possessed while still in his mind. The world in turn reacts on the initiator of action: it defines and tests his hopes and ideals, frustrates them, distorts them, and occasionally fulfils them in an unexpected form. This to-and-fro is dialectical rather than mechanical or deterministic because of the intervention of consciousness, which reviews and synthesizes - and decides. On this consciousness which is the centre of action and value depends all that makes the novel human.

The ethical emphasis in the nineteenth century novel meant that it was naturally concerned with this moment of freedom built into consciousness - but it was also concerned with the richness and poverty of consciousness as the only repository of value. Moreover, when a society is seen as fragmented (as in *Great Expectations*) and when the individual's relation to that society is unstable (as in *Great Expectations*), the richness of an individual consciousness tends to be private and idiosyncratic. And this is why Dickens evokes the richness of the interior life in his novel by a technique similar to that of De Quincey; he uses for instance patterns of imagery to build up the sense of a mental world - which is the narrator-protagonist's individuality, his haunting, his fate.

Part of the greatness of *Great Expectations* is its complete fusion of the traditional linear plot with the new kind of patterning: essentially this is a fusion of a fate formed in interaction with the world and an inner imaginative fate largely determined by its own laws. In the *Opium-Eater* there were moments when the two patterns touched and interacted, but they remained distinct. To gain a true picture of what happens in *Great Expectations* one would need to take the two types of pattern in conjunction: I think one would come up with an interpretation something like that which follows.

2.

In the first part of the novel, Pip is largely passive. Things happen to him. In particular, he has his confrontations with Magwitch and with Satis House. These things happen by chance, but it is because of Pip's character that they grow to dominate his life: because he is timid, sensitive, kind and imaginative. He is these things partly because of his upbringing, which makes him vulnerable, helpless in regard to the experiences forced on him, partly because he is a nice boy by nature.

He cannot communicate these experiences or bring his reason to bear on them. In a special way they become his nightmare. Everything he sees becomes imbued with some meaning that derives from them. Believing that he has expectations that derive from Miss Havisham, he believes that fate has chosen for him to live in the Satis House world. Yet the texture of his life and imagination is in a strange way as much, if not more, made up of the Magwitch world. Pip once describes waiting for Estella in the following way:

I consumed the whole time in thinking how strange it was that I should be encompassed by all this taint of prison and crime; that in my childhood out on our lonely marshes on a winter evening I should have first encountered it;

that it should have reappeared on two occasions, starting out like a stain that was faded but not gone; that it should in this new way pervade my fortune and advancement. While my mind was thus engaged, I thought of the beautiful young Estella, proud and refined, coming towards me, and I thought with absolute abhorrence of the contrast between the jail and her. I wished that Wemmick had not met me, or that I had not yielded to him and gone with him, so that, of all days in the year, on this day I might not have had Newgate in my breath and on my clothes. I beat the prison dust off my feet as I sauntered to and fro, and I shook it out of my dress, and I exhaled its air from my lungs. So contaminated did I feel, remembering who was coming, that the coach came quickly after all, and I was not yet free from the soiling consciousness of Mr. Wemmick's conservatory, when I saw her face at the coach window and her hand waving to me.

What *was* the nameless shadow which again in that one instant had passed? (GE 32, 230)

It should be noted that the 'nameless shadow' points ultimately to Magwitch, the convict, and connects Estella, even, with him and so with the criminal world.

The return of Magwitch, and the discovery that it is from him that he derives his expectations, shatters Pip's interpretation of his world, and in this way makes it possible for him to escape his nightmare by understanding, forgiveness, charity and renunciation. The reader is left with an understanding of the nightmare's meaning which is at the same time a revelation of the nature of society.

The pattern of the story is very close to the pattern made familiar to us by clinical psychology: the story of the man who has suffered intensely painful experiences in early childhood which, having been rejected either partially or fully by the conscious memory, poison the rest of his experience with irrational anxiety, until the suppressed memories are forced into the open and dealt with rationally and without fear, after which the patient is freed. This pattern has formed the basis of many modern novels and plays: in fact it would be true to say that it has been generalized beyond the realm of the pathological and has become one of the most important frameworks by which modern people seek to understand and control their experience.

The saga of liberation carries a sting in its tail, however. It is an article of faith among artists that anyone who has been successfully psycho-analysed can no longer create. In a similar way, Pip's imaginative life has been so bound up with the twin spectres of Magwitch and Miss Havisham that when

he 'finishes off' that part of his life - and we see that he has no choice - it is as though there is nothing left. By exorcizing the spectre of Magwitch, he has exorcized Estella as well - and Estella, at this stage of the novel, is intended to represent all that is imaginative in Pip. Pip is not exactly left a robot, but in the original version of the ending there is an almost explicit insistence on his final anonymity. For the reader of the novel, at least, everything that was Pip is gone. One of the motives for writing the altered version of the ending - a scene which cannot be taken seriously as an event, but only as representing a truth about Pip's mind - must have been to qualify the sense of emptiness, to suggest that Pip's life can remain, in some distant and melancholy sense, enriched by the imaginative residue of his cauterized past.

3.

> There are in our existence spots of time,
> Which with distinct pre-eminence retain
> A vivifying Virtue, whence ...
> ... our minds
> Are nourished and invisibly repaired ...
> (WWP XII 208-15, see p.III.3)

The 'spots of time' that retain pre-eminence for Pip, standing watch over his life and giving it its meaning - his encounters with Magwitch and Miss Havisham - these are not obviously vivifying, rather the opposite. In Miss Havisham's case the experience has a special effect on Pip because a violence has been done to nature. The intensity that affects him so strongly is largely an intensity that has been deliberately and artificially produced, as in a bad work of art. Hence Dickens's own means of depicting the intensity, without themselves becoming bad art, also tend to partake of deliberate artifice. This makes it easier to start by discussing Dickens's techniques in introducing Pip

to the world of Satis House before trying to understand the much subtler means he uses in the Magwitch scenes.

His first concern is to give Pip's experience of Miss Havisham special status by separating it off from the rest of his life, isolating it like a picture in a frame. One of the means by which he does this is to have Pumblechook, who on this occasion represents the village, turned back at the gate. Later we hear that he has been at her door and has heard her speak, but has not been allowed in. One is reminded of the strange restrictions or inhibitions sometimes placed on people in a Kafka novel: K is permitted to look at Klamm through a spy-hole, but never to be in the same room with him; *his* presence rules out the possibility of a high-ranking castle official's presence, etc. The implication is that they belong to different worlds, incompatible realities. Pip has as it were privileged access to Miss Havisham's reality, but he must approach it unaccompanied by the village reality he might bring with him, he must leave Pumblechook at the gate. Moreover, Pip is led out of the daylight by Estella, who has a candle, along dark passages and up a dark staircase. This, too, acts as a frame. We shall later come to recognize a dark staircase, whenever it appears in this novel, as a signal that time has ceased to exist.

Having brought him to the door, Estella goes off - with the candle. Left in the dark, Pip knocks and is told to enter.

> I entered, therefore, and found myself in a pretty large room, well lighted with wax candles. No glimpse of daylight was to be seen in it. It was a dressing-room, as I supposed from the furniture, though much of it was of forms and uses then quite unknown to me. But prominent in it was a draped table with a gilded looking-glass, and that I made out at first to be a fine lady's dressing-table.
>
> Whether I should have made out this object so soon, if there had been no fine lady sitting at it, I cannot say. In an armchair, with an elbow resting on the table and her head leaning on that hand, sat the strangest lady I have ever seen or shall ever see.
>
> She was dressed in rich materials - satins, and lace, and silks - all of white. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white. Some bright jewels sparkled on her neck and on her hands, and some other jewels lay sparkling on the table. Dresses, less splendid than the dress she wore, and half-packed trunks, were scattered about. She had not quite

finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on - the other was on the table near her hand - her veil was but half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for her bosom lay with those trinkets, and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers, and a Prayer-Book, all confusedly heaped about the looking-glass. (GE 8, 59-60)

The transition from daylight to darkness and then to this blinding, unreal, otherwordly light has the effect of putting Miss Havisham into another world - she can never again be 'a character in the book' in the same way as the other characters, never quite.

Moreover, Dickens can use the light and its effect on Pip's eyes to define Pip's psychological state. Immediately after the passage just quoted, Pip says:

It was not in the first moments that I saw all these things, though I saw more of them in the first moments than might be supposed. (GE 8,60)

As unexpected light both blinds and defines, Pip is in that heightened state of learning - often experienced in a fresh environment - where one is both more than usually bewildered and more than usually perceptive. In his first impression of the room, which is in one sense an utterly wrong impression, he has already come very close to Miss Havisham. And this flash of understanding is (once again) embodied in the way the light is rendered.

The accumulated effect of it is overwhelming. In a later chapter, describing Miss Havisham's banqueting hall, Pip talks about "Certain wintry branches of candles on the high chimney-piece" (GE 11,82) - the other element there is a smoking fire which fills the room with cold mist, completing the winter landscape. In its context *here* the candlelight is cold, but it is brilliant. Everything lends brilliance. There is the mirror to reflect it, there are the white stuffs (and the inspired touch by which Dickens makes Miss Havisham's white hair contribute to the effect), the jewels. There is the disorder, which at this stage has the effect of profusion, and in particular a profusion of light and delicately brilliant texture. It is a world closed in on itself and reflecting itself, first of all a magical world of beauty, a fairy

cave. The beauty is cold and yet brilliant, hard and yet delicate and passionate. It is also eerie - an effect probably due to the way Miss Havisham's white hair makes part of it. Apart from all this lending force to the contrast that is to come when Pip sees more, it is of considerable significance that Pip should have had a vision of Miss Havisham's passion before any other impression, before he becomes aware of its decay. Pip always sees *more* of Miss Havisham than anyone else - this is why we can believe in the way their fates are interwoven, and in the way Pip is felt in the end to have been an active partner in their ever-more-mysterious connection.

Having registered the brilliance of the scene, and so the existence of a way of life prepared to give expression to the imaginative, the passionate, and the beautiful, Pip's next recognition is of the prominence of "a fine lady's dressing-table" in it. It would seem natural enough that his eyes should give this item prominence, for the only human figure in the room is sitting in front of it. However, Pip the narrator is anxious to point out that this may not necessarily have been the reason for his fixing on it: "Whether I should have made out this object so soon, if there had been no fine lady sitting at it, I cannot say". We are left feeling that it is not impossible Pip's eyes were drawn to the dressing-table even before they had registered the lady. And how is it that he knows what this item of furniture is for, even though he has never seen anything like it before, and does not yet know the "forms and uses" of the rest? His singling out of the object as the centre of all that meets his eyes is already an *interpretation of* what meets his eyes. An intuition of the meaning of the room he has entered is already there: not as conscious understanding, but embedded in the order of his perception. For a fine lady's dressing-table with a fine lady at it is a sensuous manifestation of pride, self-involvement, self-immersion, a theatricality-of-the-self for the self as well as for others. Pip is as so often 'understanding in advance of what he understands'. That so much intuition of Miss Havisham's case should be

latent in his vision is a tribute to Pip's sensitivity and intelligence, but it is also a tribute to Miss Havisham's theatrical talents, her ability to use stage properties expressively. Pip is showing himself to be sensitive to something that is after all imprinted very strongly on the room, a room which goes out of its way to explain itself to him. He feels it as it is intended to be felt, or rather as Miss Havisham intends it to feel to herself.

Miss Havisham is a woman who is determined to live entirely within her own head, entirely within the pattern of memories and fantasies that have made up her passion. Having lived in a world of unreality and boredom she intends to make her one moment of real passion eternal and immutable, even though it is a passion of suffering and humiliation. To shut out the changes that the outer world brings she has determined to imprint her inner world on her surroundings, live within a concrete embodiment of what has inscribed itself on the palimpsest of her mind. Moreover, she has the wealth and the sheer will and the intensity of passion to place this spell on everything around her, to make the spell work. It is not in any loose way that Dickens refers to her as "the Witch of the place" (GE 11, 82). Later, in the banqueting hall, Pip says: "In the heavy air of the room, and the heavy darkness that brooded in its remoter corners, I even had an alarming fancy that Estella and I might presently begin to decay." (GE 11,86). In a similar way he is soon to write about Estella that "Her contempt was so strong, that it became infectious, and I caught it." (GE 8, 62) It is inevitable that Pip should be affected by the calculated, emotionally charged aura of Satis House. What is remarkable is the innocence and the readiness to sympathize that show themselves in his involuntary responses, and that give him, finally, a kind of resilience. This means he is not only prey to the *evil* implications of the place. In the end he can be the knight that frees the castle from the evil spell on it.

The most dramatic stage in Pip's perception of the room is the fading of the illusion of beauty. The scene changes under Pip's very eyes, in instantaneous decay, and he sees things as any healthy child would ordinarily see them. The

white reveals itself as a faded yellow, the texture of the materials turns out to be that of "earthy paper", the brilliance has now shrunk to Miss Havisham's eyes, where Pip finds it intimidating. Here, too, Dickens initiates a series of, comparisons that are to be developed in a remarkable way later.

> Once, I had been taken to see some ghastly waxwork at the Fair, representing I know not what impossible personage lying in state. Once, I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress, that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. Now, waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me. (GE 8, 60)

And two pages later:

> So she sat, corpse-like, as we played at cards; the frillings and trimmings on her bridal dress looking like earthy paper. I knew nothing then of the discoveries that are occasionally made of bodies buried in ancient times, which fall to powder in the moment of being distinctly seen; but I have often thought since, that she must have looked as if the admission of the natural light of day would have struck her to dust. (GE 8,62)

These comparisons underline what has been enacted before us by the movement of the description, the way changes take place surreptitiously in the scene while Pip is still looking at the same objects, changes in perception that enact, in the space of moments, the decay of the room that has taken years to complete itself. Miss Havisham's passion has changed into a kind of life-in-death, her bridal veil into a shroud.

We are introduced here to the idea of Miss Havisham as a wraith, a vampire back from the grave. Take the following passage:

> "Do you know what I touch here?" she said, laying her hands, one upon the other, on her left side.
> "Yes, ma'am." (It made me think of the young man.)
> "What do I touch?"
> "Your heart."
> "Broken!"
> She uttered the word with an eager look, and with strong emphasis, and with a weird smile that had a kind of boast in it. Afterwards, she kept her hands there for a little while, and slowly took them away as if they were heavy.
> "I am tired," said Miss Havisham. "I want diversion, and I have done with men and women. Play." (GE 8, 60-1)

Miss Havisham reminds Pip of the 'young man' invented by Magwitch, because that man was after his heart and liver, making him acutely conscious of those organs. So Miss Havisham for a moment returns Pip to his old experiences on the marshes,

his encounter with Magwitch's violence and need, the hunger that gave rise to Magwitch's cannibalistic fantasy.

There is a further irony in Pip's involuntary associations, however, for when he had seen Compeyson on the marshes he had immediately identified him as the heart-devouring young man in question - and it is in fact Compeyson who has broken Miss Havisham's heart. Moreover, Compeyson is linked to Magwitch by the bond of Magwitch's revenge. What must be one of the most disturbing things about Magwitch for Pip is that revenge is his ruling passion, for which he is prepared to sacrifice even his freedom. And when Magwitch's revengefulness is turned away from Compeyson to society as a whole, on which he intends to be revenged by using Pip, we see that there is a very strong parallel between him and Miss Havisham, who wishes to be avenged on men with the aid of Estella. If Miss Havisham doesn't actually eat hearts, she deliberately sets out to break them. And the above passage is strong in giving an inkling of the origins of revengefulness, presenting it as a form of emotional greed: "She uttered the word with an eager look, and with strong emphasis, and with a weird smile that had a kind of boast in it".

Equally important is the way in which Miss Havisham's sudden flash of passion - the "eager look" - dies away, turning into a heaviness.

Afterwards, she kept her hands there for a little while, and slowly took them away as if they were heavy.

What we have here, among all other instances of decay, is the decay of a gesture. Because the weariness of it is part organic (due to Miss Havisham's age and bodily frailty), and part psychological (being a weariness of the will), this decay of a gesture can work as a transition between the decay of the room and the decay of a passion that is being maintained by the will only. Both crumble under the pressure of time and process, the spiritual as well as the physical; both grow warped by natural process as a punishment for their rigidity.

Miss Havisham eats out the hearts of others as a corollary to eating out her own: her wraith is even seen as able to work at a distance on those who have outraged it. Arthur Havisham, we are given to understand, dies of remorse

(alcohol being the instrument), and, dying, he sees her phantom double come to finish him off. It is an interesting double: the figure of Miss Havisham has undergone certain transformations, but retains everything essential; her suffering and Havisham's guilt have become concrete attributes of the spectre. For one thing, there is no doubt about it: the veil is a shroud. Havisham hardly knows what to call it half of the time, he talks about "that ugly thing" (GE 42, 300) but he knows what it's for: when she manages to throw it over him he'll die. Her passionate nature, combined with his guilt, makes him see her now as "awful mad" (GE 42, 299) - "Look at her eyes!" (GE 42, 299) Finally, "And over where her heart's broke - *you* broke it! - there's drops of blood." (GE 42, 299) Havisham has seen his sister press her hand against her heart. Now the gesture has translated itself into a concrete mark, become a static part of her appearance, an image of startling visual intensity: the earthy paper of the wedding-dress is stained with spots of blood. After such evidence of the creative power of Havisham's imagination under the pressure of guilt, his death cannot be *merely* melodramatic. "Then he lifted himself up hard, and was dead." (GE 42, 300) - it is like a terrible awakening.

Through all the transformations that take place in the way the spirit of Satis House presents itself to us, Dickens tends to retain all the elements of the whole while making different emphases. It is not long after the brilliance of Miss Havisham's room has faded into a yellow of decay that the vitality and beauty which were there at first for Pip are brought into the scene again in a different way: Estella is called back. It is made clear that Estella is a part of the Satis House world, embodying an aspect of its qualities and implying, for this reason, many of the unpleasant aspects of it that we don't directly connect with her. She is shown immediately - by symbolic means - as being in Miss Havisham's power. The minute she enters, the following takes place:

> Miss Havisham beckoned her to come close, and took up a jewel from the table, and tried its effect upon her fair young bosom and against her pretty brown hair. "Your own, one day, my dear, and you will use it well ..." (GE 8, 61)

It is a magical, witch's way of transferring her powers to a disciple and in doing so taking over her soul, even though it is at the same time a hint of the way wealth may be used to the same end. And here is Estella's account of her childhood relationship with Miss Havisham:

> "Why should I call you mad," returned Estella, "I of all people? Does anyone live, who knows what set purposes you have, half as well as I do? Does anyone live, who knows what a steady memory you have, half as well as I do? I who have sat on this same hearth on the little stool that is even now beside you there, learning your lessons and looking up into your face, when your face was strange and frightened me!" (GE 38, 264)

4.

Such talk of witches and wraiths as I have indulged in in the last section certainly has its justification, in that it corresponds to a real folkloric fantasy-element in Dickens's presentation. There is a certain danger, however, in leaving one's reader with the impression that Dickens has merely superimposed folklorical themes and images on his plot, like collages clumsily stuck over a naturalistic painting. The literary equivalent of this last effect is certainly a familiar part of our experience in reading Dickens, but we soon notice that at his best Dickens works with a continuous spectrum of gradations - mediating between the extremes of realistic psychology and mythic-folkloric symbolism. We cannot tell just where the realism ends and the symbolism begins.

Even when Miss Havisham is being presented in the manner of something out of Hansel and Gretel, Dickens is really referring to something he knows about the effect of intense feeling (especially when artificially and unnaturally cultivated) on other people; particularly on sensitive children at a

disadvantage. Behind Miss Havisham's whims of adopting Estella and having Pip round to play lies an instinctive urge to save herself - by the importation of fresh life - from the life-in-death she has imposed on herself, partly by having surrounded herself with the scenery of a passion once intense but now paralysed. But the spell of her own creation is too great; it defeats her potential saviours, at least for the meanwhile. It destroys Estella, and almost destroys Pip, though not quite. In the end he is able to save Miss Havisham from her world - though not to make a normal life possible for her.

On Pip's first visit the spell is total, and he is unable to separate the concrete facts from the imaginative charge that has been put upon them. In fact, he is unable to make a separation between an objective reality and the fantasies that arise (with the strength of hallucinations) out of the effort of his mind to deal with his new experiences. The reader is placed in much the same position: is the Estella we catch a glimpse of in the following lines real, or an imagination?

> Behind the farthest end of the brewery was a rank garden with an old wall: not so high but that I could struggle up and hold on long enough to look over it, and see that the rank garden was the garden of the house, and that it was overgrown with tangled weeds, but that there was a track upon the green and yellow paths, as if someone sometimes walked there, and that Estella was walking away from me even then. (GE 8, 65)

It is as though Pip's perception of there being something alive lost in the waste of Satis House spontaneously produced the image of Estella. And he goes on to say: "But she seemed to be everywhere" (GE 8, 65), as though everything in the place made her form appear for him.

> For, when I yielded to the temptation presented by the casks, and began to walk on them, I saw *her* walking on them at the end of the yard of casks. She had her back towards me, and held her pretty brown hair spread out in her two hands, and never looked round, and passed out of my view directly. (GE 8, 65)

The picture of Estella with her hair spread out in her two hands is an image with the kind of mysterious poetic intensity that comes straight from the world of childhood dream. Yet even here we do not know whether it is Pip's complicated feelings about Estella - her unattainability, her freedom, her indifference -

that are appearing here in visionary form, or whether the figure is really Estella herself, tormenting him skilfully through her intuitive understanding of his dream.

Now follows a passage where the credible develops straight into the incredible:

When I first went into [the brewery itself], and, rather oppressed by its gloom, stood near the door looking about me, I saw her pass among the extinguished fires, and ascend some light iron stairs, and go out by a gallery high overhead, as if she were going out into the sky. (GE 8, 65)

Q.D. Leavis has pointed out how this passage enacts the significance of Estella's name - The Star.

The progressive invasion of the visible world by the imagination culminates in a full-scale hallucination:

I turned my eyes - a little dimmed by looking up at the frosty light - towards a great wooden beam in a low nook of the building near me on my right hand, and I saw a figure hanging there by the neck. A figure all in yellow white, with but one shoe to the feet; and it hung so, that I could see that the faded trimmings of the dress were like earthy paper, and that the face was Miss Havisham's, with a movement going over the whole countenance as if she were trying to call to me. In terror of seeing the figure, and in the terror of being certain that it had not been there a moment before, I at first ran from it, and then ran towards it. And my terror was greatest of all, when I found no figure there. (GE 8, 65)

The charge of melodrama is frequently brought against Dickens so indiscriminately, that one takes real pleasure in pointing out the extremely sensitive use of imaginative power that has gone into this particular creation, melodramatic as it might appear at first glance. One detail should suffice to make the point: Pip's noticing that the figure has "but one shoe to the feet". The pathos of the hanged man, as depicted in innumerable late medieval prints, is in the neck where life has been made captive by the rope, in the posture of humility or humiliation, and finally in the helplessness of the feet, dangling with the toes downwards, unable to reach the ground: "Jamais nul temps nous ne sommes assis" (FV 206). It is the *helplessness* of the figure which impresses Pip most, and the humiliation of that helplessness - not even so much the horror of violent death, though that, as we shall see, is also woven into the picture.

Miss Havisham's one shoe and the white stocking (trodden ragged) on the other foot gain a new significance that we cannot forget.

Because pity is a much stronger ingredient of the hallucination than any violence which may be expressed in the hanging, Taylor Stoehr's interpretation of the vision as an "unacknowledged dream wish" (TS 108) must be rejected. It is a mechanical application of Freud to Dickens: it is true that in Dickens an image rising from the unconscious may represent a wish, but it may equally represent a fear, or embody any emotion or intuitive perception that the conscious mind has not yet taken into account. Through the vision of Miss Havisham hanging from the beam Pip realizes, though not in words, that Miss Havisham is a pathetic figure (he hasn't had a chance to realize this before); also that he pities her, and that she needs his help. Thus the hallucination may also be understood as a message from her to him. There is "a movement going over the whole countenance as if she were trying to call to [him]". Miss Havisham has, without wishing it or knowing it, sent out some signal of distress to Pip which he has unconsciously received. His running away and then back to where the figure had been can be taken as symbolizing his fear of and acceptance of the task, though of course this is not clear to us at this stage. In the following chapter, when Pip (partly to protect Miss Havisham from his sister's misunderstanding) refuses to reveal the true facts about her, we feel it is the revelation of her that he has had in the hallucination which has prompted the delicacy of feeling involved in his reaction.

But the expression on the features of the hallucinatory Miss Havisham has other, more macabre, connotations due to the way it is secretly taken up by other images later in the book. The "movement going over the whole countenance" is echoed by what passes over the face of Mr. Jaggers's housekeeper:

> Rather tall, of a lithe nimble figure, extremely pale, with large faded eyes, and a quantity of streaming hair. I cannot say whether any diseased affection of the heart caused her lips to be parted as if she were panting, and her face to bear a curious expression of suddenness and flutter; but I know that I had been to see "Macbeth" at the theatre, a night or two before, and that

her face looked to me as if it were all disturbed by fiery air, like the faces I had seen rise out of the Witches' caldron. ... She set on every dish; and I always saw in her face, a face rising out of the caldron. Years afterwards, I made a dreadful likeness of that woman, by causing a face that had no other natural resemblance to it than it derived from flowing hair, to pass behind a bowl of flaming spirits in a dark room. (GE 26, 187 - 8)

Add to this a piece of pure Dickensian grotesquerie, his portrayal of certain other of Mr. Jaggers's possessions:

... two dreadful casts on a shelf, of faces peculiarly swollen, and twitchy about the nose. (GE 20, 147)

Here is Wemmick's account of the latter:

"You're right," said Wemmick; "it's the genuine look. Much as if one nostril was caught up with a horse-hair and a little fish-hook. Yes, he came to the same end; quite the natural end here, I assure you." (GE 24, 177-8)

The casts are the death-masks of murderers who have died by hanging, a violent death that has left the expression of a horrible moment of fear (and of anger, too, perhaps) frozen on their faces. Molly's face is partly an expression of her own suppressed - paralyzed - violence; but it is also the same expression as that of the casts: her every movement of life is checked by Jaggers's bringing the fear of the gallows to bear on her. She lives within that fear (which must be brought to mind by everything in Jaggers's establishment - she must be under its spell much as Pip is under that of Satis House); it is a form of living death. This is why Miss Havisham's expression as Pip sees it at this moment is so similar to hers. Miss Havisham's life, too, is a living death, the expression representing what she has done to herself by allowing the will to do violence to her vitality. And the involuntary response of her own soul to such a life is one of helpless fear, no matter how resolutely repressed and denied.

Moreover, the gallows is one of the central symbols of the book; it is a symbol of this society's view of crime and punishment, of the violence in human nature and the violent suppression of it; it is also bound up with the violence that is a part of class domination, and that ends in the powerful doing violence to themselves as well as to the weak. It is a symbol of how the customs and institutions of society become the brutality of the private man and the nightmare

of the child, for an old gibbet is one of Pip's childhood nightmares even before Magwitch comes to offer the nightmare substance.

The vision of Miss Havisham hanging from the beam leads straight back into the poetic centre of the book, which is like a knot in which all strands of the plot and all forms of human violence, physical and psychological, are shown to mesh.

5.

We have not yet touched on the most disturbing aspect of Miss Havisham's room: the arrest of time that reigns in it.

> It was then I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago. I noticed that Miss Havisham put down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up. As Estella dealt the cards, I glanced at the dressing-table again, and saw that the shoe upon it, once white, now yellow, had never been worn. I glanced down at the foot from which the shoe was absent and saw that the silk stocking on it, once white, now yellow, had been trodden ragged. Without this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects, not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud. (GE 8, 62)

Certain of the images suggest an arrest of time that is exact and abstract - absolute. Such are the arrest of the clock and the watch, but also the placing of the jewel. "I noticed that Miss Havisham put down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up." The jewel, because of its exactitude, its density, the concentration of its life, acts as a fulcrum when placed with such precision. It holds the rest of the room in relation to its immovability. For a brief moment, with Miss Havisham's interest, it is brought to life -as a jewel may in fact be brought to life when it is lifted into the light; when she replaces it it dies again, and her intense concentration on the exact spot

imbues the jewelled point with a sort of inertial resistance and fixity of its own. This is, of course, because the jewel has not only a precise address in the room, but also a precise address in her brain. From the jewel we generalize to all the objects in the room: they, too, are points that define a space by their stability; all life moves with relation to these co-ordinates.

These images of the clock and the jewel are the images by which Dickens makes us aware of the inertial tendency in grief or rage or any strong emotion, the obsessional element in them all. The mind, initially unwilling (if not unable) to exchange its pain for a state of lesser intensity, ends up by feeding its pain and keeping it artificially alive.

Here we can make a brief comparison between Dickens and the film director Alain Resnais. In the film *L'Année Dernière a Marienbad* (Last Year at Marienbad) the obsession of an unresolved memory is expressed as architecture, in the placing of chairs, in the laying of cards, in the recurrence of figures frozen in ambiguity, either ready to go on or about to turn back. In *Hiroshima Mon Amour* the obsession of loss is dealt with through the constant reappearance of the lover, without certainty of either his reality or his imaginariness; the relevant point for us is the lack of development in his reappearances: neither his face nor the lovers' relationship changes, no matter how different the environments they move through, no matter how full the environments are with independent life and change and movement. The face reappears always with the patient and unreasonably expectant glance of an arrested love.

It may be said that each of these films by Resnais is made from a point of view of sympathy with the obsession it portrays, at any rate from the point of view of the desire to maintain the obsession that operates *within* the obsession itself. (The woman in *Hiroshima*, for instance, is afraid that her Japanese lover will cause her to lose the anguish she experienced for the German soldier; she is afraid that the memory of the Japanese, too, will fade through its own repetition.) Dickens, however, sees the obsession from without as well

as from within: hence he sees also the inexactitude of time's arrest - the frayed sock testifies to the movement of time in spite of Miss Havisham's continuing to wear it since she stopped the clocks; in fact it is precisely her wilful battle against time which ensures that it will work only destructively, and show itself belatedly as inner, hidden decay.

Thus Dickens can state his moral in terms of 'ruin', also using the word 'vanity' where I have used 'obsession' and so linking wilfully maintained obsessions in general with his themes of greed and pride:

> And could I look upon her without compassion, seeing her punishment in the ruin she was, in her profound unfitness for this earth on which she was placed, in the vanity of sorrow which had become a master mania, like the vanity of penitence, the vanity of remorse, the vanity of unworthiness, and other monstrous vanities that have been curses in this world? (GE 49, 341)

It is Miss Havisham's 'vanity of sorrow', then, that informs every aspect of Satis House, and that determines its unchangingness, its timelessness. We have the sensation of always being in the same place, dominated always by the same configuration of symbolic presences: the whiteness-yellowness, the veil-shroud texture, the corpse-in-the-room, the altar-piece (whether dressing-table or wedding-cake). The changes are changes in our perception, the temporary predominance of one element or other in the scene. Take, for instance, the shift to the banqueting hall:

> I crossed the staircase landing, and entered the room she indicated. From that room, too, the daylight was completedly excluded, and it had an airless smell that was oppressive. A fire had been lately kindled in the damp, old-fashioned grate, and it was more disposed to go out than to burn up, and the reluctant smoke which hung in the room seemed colder than the clearer air - like our own marsh mist. Certain wintry branches of candles on the high chimney-piece faintly lighted the chamber: or, it would be more expressive to say, faintly troubled its darkness. It was spacious, and I daresay had once been handsome, but every discernible thing in it was covered with dust and mould, and dropping to pieces. The most prominent object was a long table with a tablecloth spread on it, as if a feast had been in preparation when the house and the clock all stopped together. An épergne or centre-piece of some kind was in the middle of this cloth; it was so heavily overhung with cobwebs that its form was quite undistinguishable; and, as I looked along the yellow expanse out of which I remember its seeming to grow, like a black fungus, I saw speckled-legged spiders with blotchy bodies running home to it, and running out from it, as if some circumstance of the greatest public importance had just transpired in the spider community. (GE 11, 81 - 2)

On the surface, the banqueting hall is quite different from the room with the dressing-table. It is dark, not even initially brilliant. Yet the glamour is strangely still there, as though a swift look from the corner of one's eye might reveal it. I have already mentioned the candlesticks with their suggestion of a wintry scene: they contain some hint of the magical impression Pip first receives from Miss Havisham's room - even though the 'winter mist' is really smoke and the candles don't light the room. Certainly the coldness is there. And the wedding cake with its veil of cobwebs is potentially part of such a winter-landscape. The cake is of course presented by Dickens as totally ugly. Yet the director of the well-known film of *Great Expectations* was not really being unfaithful to the hints and potentialities of the whole scene in presenting the shrouded cake as something fantastic and in its way beautiful. To be brief, this room *is* the other room, but with the elements of decay and corruption become more evident and visible, and even taking on life in the groping and scuttling of the insects - who alone escape Miss Havisham's spell, and prove the continuity of everyday affairs.

In much the same way Miss Havisham's nightly wandering and moaning, witnessed later by Pip, seems simply the vibration of a different overtone set off by the old symbolism. If this were not so, the parallels with Lady Macbeth would make us experience the passage as derivative, over-ambitious and perhaps absurd. But the whole scene rises like an emanation of what we have already registered of *that house*. Like so much that is seen there, we are not even sure of its reality. Is this Miss Havisham getting her food or reliving her marriage-day, or is she sleep-walking, or is this a hallucination or Miss Havisham's phantom self? We know we are witnessing the inner Miss Havisham, hidden in the day-time. The description of her "ceaseless low cry" (GE 38, 266) seduces us into feeling we have heard the moan all the time in Satis House, that it has been there beneath all the things we have been shown there, and that it is now only being rendered more explicit - it has risen to the surface here in the night, so that

we can hear it physically now.

There is even a comic Miss Havisham's world, a metamorphosis of it into fantasy under the stress of torture, when Pip reports back to his family: black velvet coach, gold plates, flags, immense dogs fighting for veal cutlets. (Is the coach a new form of the dressing-table?) Of course, there is distortion here as well as transformation, in that Pip presents the visit as enjoyable (perhaps out of a sense of duty to his sister, perhaps as a compensation for his own disappointment). Nevertheless, his account gives a fair picture, in sensationalist terms, of her general grandness and style. It doesn't really matter how eccentric Pip makes Miss Havisham in his sister's and Mr. Pumblechook's eyes, so long as her true eccentricity - which cannot be called flightiness - is kept hidden. He gives a fantastical representation of the Miss Havisham world which, while making her more amenable to village gossip (and perhaps for that reason more easily credible to Pumblechook and Mrs. Joe), succeeds in hiding the suffering and vulnerable and *real* old woman whom Pip somehow already has knowledge of and is delicate enough to protect from coarser minds. Pip's concern is of course not entirely disinterested - she is after all *his* secret.

6.

So much for the perpetual sameness of the Miss Havisham world. Into this stasis Dickens introduces a development that comes to involve Pip closely, and it is this we must now trace.

We gain our first inkling of a force growing in Miss Havisham that is rebelling against the tyranny of her will in the scene when Estella momentarily rebels against her. "It happened on the occasion of this visit that some sharp words arose between Estella and Miss Havisham." (GE 38, 263)

The scene that follows, in which Miss Havisham reproaches Estella for lovelessness with regard to her and Estella retorts by blaming her upbringing, is admittedly a poor one, and is too simply a demonstration of the logical results of Miss Havisham's policy with Estella. Such a stock situation, where the pupil confronts his teacher with his own principles and shows himself to be far more dogmatic and invulnerable in his distortedness than the teacher could ever manage to be, is far more suited to a book like *Hard Times*, where Bitzer's final confrontation with Gradgrind fits in with the whole book's more stylized satirical dialogue. Nevertheless, it is in this scene that we become aware of a Miss Havisham who needs love. And the description of her collapse after the battle is memorable, darkly prefiguring the way her life will end.

> Miss Havisham had settled down, I hardly knew how, upon the floor, among the faded bridal relics with which it was strewn. I took advantage of the moment - I had sought one from the first - to leave the room, after beseeching Estella's attention to her, with a movement of my hand. When I left, Estella was yet standing by the great chimney-piece, just as she had stood throughout. Miss Havisham's gray hair was all adrift upon the ground, among the other bridal wrecks, and was a miserable sight to see. (GE 38, 265)

When Pip returns to the room, he finds Estella mending some of Miss Havisham's papery clothes - it is a symbolic reversion, on both sides, to the old situation.

The crisis that decisively sets a new Miss Havisham in conflict with the old one comes later. As in the earlier scene, we are aware of a strict logic in the occurrence, but the logic, here, is not mechanical or over-stylized. The psychology is far subtler.

Pip has discovered that his expectations don't derive from Miss Havisham, and has realized that Estella has never been meant for him; he goes to Miss Havisham's house, tells Estella of his love for her, and begs her not to marry Bentley Drummle. At intervals he notices Miss Havisham's reaction to the scene:

> I saw Miss Havisham put her hand to her heart and hold it there, as she sat looking by turns at Estella and at me. (GE 44, 310)

> When I raised my face again, there was such a ghastly look on Miss Havisham's, that it impressed me, even in my passionate hurry and grief. (GE 44, 311)

> But ever afterwards, I remembered - and soon afterwards with stronger reason - that while Estella looked at me merely with incredulous wonder, the spectral figure of Miss Havisham, her hand still covering her heart, seemed all resolved into a ghastly stare of pity and remorse. (GE 44, 312)

The wheel has come full circle: Miss Havisham has her revenge. What she has been working for - to see the duplication of her own moment of suffering in others - has been attained. But now there is something new. Spiritually, she has been living within her moment of suffering for years, and now it has materialized again; but now for the first time she is able - and is indeed forced - to see it from the outside, and the effect on her is one she could not have predicted. She is overcome by 'ghastly' pity and remorse. Later she says, "Until you spoke to her the other day, and until I saw in you a looking-glass that showed me what I once felt myself, I did not know what I had done." (GE 49, 341)

Pip sees this scene as putting an end to his relationship with the Satis House world.

> All done, all gone! So much was done and gone, and when I went out at the gate, the light of the day seemed of a darker colour than when I went in. (GE 44, 312-3)

But he is not destined to get off so lightly - with the mere ruin of all his hopes. He aims to go home, tiring himself out with the walk, finishing that part of his life with the walk. But when he comes to the Whitefriars gate, the gate is closed, and the porter shows him a note with the mysterious command: "DON'T GO HOME". We are going to have to say more about this note later. But for present purposes what it means is that Pip is to have no rest or relief, is to be kept from reflection and from a return to himself, is to be kept in the outer world of action after action, trying to clear up his life that now throws up problem after problem for his solution.

Pip's inner sense, however deceptive, of having 'done' with the Satis House world, shows itself in a subtle alteration of the house's atmosphere when he next returns, summoned by a note from Miss Havisham. The house has become merely bleak, and distant.

The best light of the day was gone when I passed along the quiet echoing courts behind the High Street. The nooks of ruin where the old monks had once had their refectories and gardens, and where the strong walls were now pressed into the service of humble sheds and stables, were almost as silent as the old monks in their graves. The cathedral chimes had at once a sadder and a more remote sound to me, as I hurried on, avoiding observation, than they had ever had before; so, the swell of the old organ was borne to my ears like funeral music; and the rooks, as they hovered about the gray tower, and swung in the bare high trees of the priory garden seemed to call to me that the place was changed, and that Estella was gone out of it for ever. (GE 49, 338)

Estella has left the house. More significantly, she no longer exists as a source of hope for Pip. With this, Pip's imaginative bond with the place is almost completely dissolved. For the first time in the book it is of no significance who lets him into the house. The elderly woman at the gate is a quite neutral figure, familiar to Pip without meaning anything to him. As an active thing, the compelling symbolism of the place seems lost, and when we see Miss Havisham we realize this is not only due to Pip's mental withdrawal but to the absence of the dynamo that gave all the objects of the house their emotional electricity, and so held the imposed vision together. Miss Havisham has left her post.

Miss Havisham was not in her own room, but was in a larger room across the landing. Looking in at the door, after knocking in vain, I saw her sitting on the hearth in a ragged chair, close before, and lost in the contemplation of the ashy fire. (GE 49, 338)

In the simply ragged chair, she too has become neutral and ineffectual, not even hearing Pip. When she becomes aware of his presence, she says: "Is it real?" This is so much the Satis House question, so much what we have had to ask ourselves there, over and again, that we start when we hear the question put by her. It is like an actor falling out of his role to discuss the play. How could the scenery retain its power of illusion?

The old Miss Havisham seems to linger only in the "ashy fire" that she is watching so closely, and that will later leap up to destroy her. Is there a parallel here with Mrs. Joe, who was struck down "when her face was turned towards the fire" (GE 15, 111)? Granted that Mrs. Joe's fire would need to

have been a flaming one, that turned her face red and angry, while Miss Havisham's fire here is choked and turned inwards with a coating of ashes. But is there an element in Miss Havisham's sin which is blood brother to Mrs. Joe's life and death of violence, so that there is some trace of the one's engulfment in that of the other? At the very least we must acknowledge a similarity in the bearing of each towards the man who has 'mastered' her. Orlick had robbed Mrs. Joe of her aggression together with her capacity to live - robbed her of them in the most brutal and simple way possible, by a blow on the back of the head - and she had had him called to her bedside. "She watched his countenance as if she were particularly wishful to be assured that he took kindly to his reception, she showed every possible desire to conciliate him, and there was an air of humble propitiation in all she did, such as I have seen pervade the bearing of a child towards a hard master." (GE 16, 115) Pip has 'mastered' Miss Havisham because he has been able to make her feel pity. Is this why she fears him? "As I brought another of the ragged chairs to the hearth and sat down, I remarked a new expression on her face, as if she were afraid of me." (GE 49, 338-9)

Miss Havisham's apprehension is, of course, due to her sense of guilt; she does not know how to bear this or express it except by throwing herself at Pip's feet. And one may well argue that it requires a very real human skill, based on an accumulated trust and a habituation in human relationships, to allow oneself to feel humility, remorse, even gratitude, without feeling that one is annihilating oneself and excluding oneself from the human circle. When Miss Havisham prostrates herself before Pip she is expressing a partly terrified dependence with regard to him, not absolutely distinguishable from Mrs. Joe's relationship with Orlick. She is still conceiving of their relationship as a power-relationship, with Pip the top dog now; at such moments, overcome by her guilt, she does not understand or know how to reach for any other form of contact.

At times Dickens presents Miss Havisham as a broken woman, who will perhaps *never* be able to communicate fully on a truly human plane. Though she has moments when she manages to establish the old resolute concentration for a while, we are at other times aware of a specially painful helplessness in all her gestures. "When I said a few reassuring words, she stretched out her tremulous right hand, as though she was going to touch me; but she recalled it again before I understood the action, or knew how to receive it." (GE 49, 399) Pip has called Miss Havisham back into a world of human sympathies, but he has not the power to give her the freedom of that world. She has neglected the ordinary human skills and has unlearnt the language of gesture.

This, principally, must be what Pip means when he speaks in this chapter of "her profound unfitness for this earth on which she was placed" (GE 49, 341). Here, however, we must experience Pip's words as unjust in their finality, for there are other moments when Miss Havisham gives evidence of a real willingness and a potential ability to establish true contact with Pip. What about the "earnest womanly compassion", the "new affection" that Pip senses in her as she calls him "Pip - my Dear!" (GE 49, 342)? And when she asks Pip: "Are you very unhappy now?" we may feel that the offer of sympathy is too direct and sudden, too clumsy - that she makes Pip suffer through it; yet we cannot deny the reality of her compassion and of her need to make contact with the man she has injured - perhaps the gesture only strikes us as clumsy because Pip is unable to respond to it immediately and with the generosity it asks from him. We are thus presented with a changed Miss Havisham whose sickness or health is difficult to evaluate: at some moments she is presented as a woman incapable of finding her way back into the circle of human sympathy; at other times we are shown how earnest her desire is to do so, and this earnestness has enabled her to learn much already. The difficulty is compounded in that she is not given more than a very short time in which to prove herself.

The vacillation in Miss Havisham's behaviour cannot be faulted from the point of view of realism; if the reader has any grounds to complain it is because Dickens is not directing his story (and his reader's response) with a clear and unambiguous sense of purpose. Dickens, perhaps, wants two separate things. He wants to show Miss Havisham's salvation from the prison she has erected around herself. On the other hand he also wants to reiterate that one does not escape one's self-imposed prison with impunity; that an addiction or an enchantment, though broken, still continues to punish and impoverish; that the frustrated demon whose spell one has avoided still takes his revenge. Miss Havisham is soon to pay absolutely, in that she herself burns along with the trappings of the obsession she has rejected.

The two purposes are not incompatible, and one could argue that either on its own would be inadequate to the truth Dickens wants to convey. Salvation at the price of destruction has always haunted human thought - it is one of the fundamental themes of tragedy and has after all its basis in experience. In fact, in the burning of Miss Havisham, Dickens fuses the two themes inseparably and quite convincingly. It is only in this last conversation with Pip that we are uneasy. We must feel that Pip does not quite meet Miss Havisham halfway. This is understandable. There may be something in him that refuses to forgive Miss Havisham so totally and so soon - forgiveness, after all, is not as easy as a mere determination to forgive. And when she falls at his feet, he must be partially taken aback because she is offering him a crippled relationship, one of dependence and domination. All this is understandable - yet it is strange that Pip, who is usually so hard on himself, should not have any sense of the lack of real warmth in his response. And perhaps this is because Dickens wishes, at those moments, to make more than is warranted of Miss Havisham's human impotence. The distortion results in some very stiff writing, particularly on Pip's side of the dialogue.

The difficulties Miss Havisham labours under in struggling to break free from her old way of life are shown symbolically in the way she is haunted by the continued existence of that life's stage-properties. When she tries to act from her new self and make restitution by paying for Herbert's entry into his firm, the materials she has to do it with all come from her old world.

> She presently rose from her seat, and looked about the blighted room for the means of writing. There were none there, and she took from her pocket a yellow set of ivory tablets, mounted in tarnished gold, and wrote upon them with a pencil in a case of tarnished gold that hung from her neck. (GE 49, 340)

The yellowed ivory and tarnished gold belong to her old state, and they hang from her neck like the ancient mariner's albatross.

The whole scene seems haunted, unable to expel its ghosts. Fantasies that Pip had had in connection with Miss Havisham, and which had been the reflection of unconscious insights into her life, are given a more concrete life now, in her ruin. When she says, "... ever so long after my broken heart is dust ..." (GE 49, 340), we think back to the bodies which when discovered crumble to dust - the association started in Pip by Miss Havisham's appearance on his first visit. Miss Havisham's white hair, a part of the picture from the start, is here revealed as a shockingly pathetic indication of her helplessness, as when she suddenly kneels at Pip's feet:

> To see her with her white hair and her worn face kneeling at my feet, gave me a shock through all my frame. (GE 49, 341)

The shock is that of seeing, nakedly revealed, what had been only implicit, in fact obscured, before. Pip's imaginations are in the process of becoming reality.

Finally, she sinks to the ground: "She was not kneeling now, but was down upon the ground." (GE 49, 341) We have been returned to the previous scene of Miss Havisham's collapse after Estella's rebellion:

> Miss Havisham had settled down, I hardly knew how, upon the floor, among the faded bridal relics with which it was strewn. I took advantage of the moment - I had sought one from the first - to leave the room, after beseeching Estella's attention to her, with a movement of my hand. When I left, Estella was yet standing by the great chimney-piece, just as she had stood throughout.

Miss Havisham's gray hair was all adrift upon the ground, among the other bridal wrecks, and was a miserable sight to see. (GE 38, 265)

It is also in the scene of her self-abasement before Pip that Miss Havisham first utters the 'magic' sentences that are to dominate her consciousness to the end: "What have I done!" "When she first came, I meant to save her from misery like mine." "Take the pencil and write under my name, 'I forgive her!' " One is tempted to say that in none of these sentences does she really succeed in getting outside herself. But that would be unnecessarily cruel: the self-abasing intensity of her guilt, which at this point imprisons her in her ego, may be a necessary stage before she can achieve a more liberating kind of remorse. And in fact, the 'magic sentences' do change their sense as they become Miss Havisham's mantra.

7.

Eventually, Pip once again takes what he believes to be his final farewell from Satis House and its demands on him, his mind chiefly preoccupied by the thought that nothing in this part of his life has come to fruition.

By the wilderness of casks that I had walked on long ago, and on which the rain of years had fallen since, rotting them in many places, and leaving miniature swamps and pools of water upon those that stood on end, I made my way to the ruined garden. I went all round it; round by the corner where Herbert and I had fought our battle; round by the casks where Estella and I had walked. So cold, so lonely, so dreary all! (GE 49, 343)

What is astonishing here is how Dickens has given the impression of a *shrunken* world ("miniature swamps and pools of water"). Pip is the adult returning to a childhood spot, and finding it smaller than he had remembered it. The effect is to make us aware that he has gained a certain amount of control over this part of his life.

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hallucination. This can be seen as a two-pronged attack on the author's part. On the one hand he offers the bribe of realism. We are given a sober

supernatural is used here to highlight a truth about the way we are morally bound up - fatally so - in the images and circumstances of our past; how these return again and again to test us, to give us the opportunity of mastering them. The sentence about Pip's 'indescribable awe' depends for its power on "The mournfulness of the place and time", which after all reflects something *within* Pip, his nagging, only partially severed bond with the place. Nor would the sentence have carried so much power had it not ended with the "gates where I had once wrung my hair after Estella had wrung my heart." Back again, back again, back again to the scenes that have left an indelible mark on our heart; for that wound knows how to choose those elements from the chaos of experience which point back to it and develop its meaning. Moving through the grounds of Satis House, Pip is wandering in a mental labyrinth that is charged at each point with meaning in terms of past suffering and newly perceived moral demands. It is because this landscape is a landscape in his mind as well as outside that the landmarks all sound so significant in Dickens's description: precise symbols of precise places in his mind - memories and lessons, but also gates to go out by, spaces of pause, passages of swifter movement, barriers, turning-points - they record Pip's desire to escape, his hesitations, the whisperings of a conscience that must seem irrational to him at this stage. Here is the passage:

> The mournfulness of the place and time, and the great terror of this illusion, though it was but momentary, caused me to feel an indescribable awe as I came out between the open wooden gates where I had once wrung my hair after Estella had wrung my heart. Passing on into the front courtyard, I hesitated whether to call the woman to let me out at the locked gate of which she had the key, or first to go upstairs and assure myself that Miss Havisham was as safe and well as I had left her. (GE 49, 343-4)

It is the emotional richness for Pip of Satis House, its function as a repository of experience, that decides him to turn back.

So we come to the final resolution of this part - the Satis House part - of Pip's life. While Miss Havisham is sitting helplessly in a ragged chair before the fire, her clothes catch alight:

whole countenance as if she were trying to call to me" (GE 8, 65) and I have pointed out how we are reminded of this by the restlessness in the features of Mr. Jaggers's housekeeper - "her face looked to me as if it were all disturbed by fiery air" (GE 26, 187). Now we see Miss Havisham actually enwrapped in fire. And in this case she also 'calls for Pip's help' - this time by "running at [him], shrieking". Of course she doesn't know what she is doing, but we know that we are to take this as finally symbolizing her need for Pip's intervention. (Moreover, *her* running at Pip corresponds to Pip's running from and towards the spectre under the beam earlier. In addition, there is here, as there, a confusion in Pip's sense of time - everything seems to happen simultaneously.)

Miss Havisham's rushing towards Pip is a symbolic statement of what we have only come to feel late in the book: that Miss Havisham has always with some part of her looked to Pip to help her out of her plight, to free her from the fate her will has imposed on her. It is of course as true that there is a part of Miss Havisham which resists this salvation, and we are reminded of this here also: " ... we were on the ground struggling like desperate enemies". We realize that Pip, well under the surface of his consciousness, has always been locked in desperate combat with Miss Havisham in order to free her from herself. That the shock of realization hits us with such force here is partly due to our shock at suddenly finding Pip and Miss Havisham in such brutal physical intimacy - "closed with her", "threw her down", "got them over her", "dragged down", "we were on the ground struggling" - such language just after we have been given Pip's gentle and tactful movements - "when I was withdrawing my head to go quietly away". If we take the struggle as a final bursting-out of Pip's struggle to save Miss Havisham from the prison of her own will, then perhaps the near suggestion of rape is not so out of place.

The symbolic destruction of Miss Havisham's terrible imaginative world follows as Pip pulls down the table-cloth to smother the flame with it.

... that I dragged the great cloth from the table for the same purpose, and with it dragged down the heap of rottenness in the midst, and all the ugly things that sheltered there ... (GE 49, 344)

Her bridal dress is destroyed by the fire:

... patches of tinder yet alight were floating in the smoky air, which, a moment ago, had been her faded bridal dress. (GE 49, 344)

A moment later:

... I saw the patches of tinder that had been her garments, no longer alight but falling in a black shower around us. (GE 49, 344)

The tinder merges with the image we have retained of Miss Havisham's hair "all adrift upon the ground" (GE 38, 265) after the quarrel with Estella. Streaming or floating hair seems to be one of Dickens's most moving symbols of pathetic helplessness throughout the book, and this note is the one that is struck as the battle dies down. But the tinder that was once a bridal dress is also a synthesis of various themes that Pip touched on in his very first impressions of Miss Havisham: the "ghastly waxwork" of the "personage lying in state" (Miss Havisham is to be shown lying in state a moment later), the "skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress" (GE 8, 60), the "frillings and trimmings on her bridal dress" that look "like earthy paper", the "bodies buried in ancient times, which fall to powder in the moment of being distinctly seen" (GE 8, 62). Pip also says in this early part of the book, that "I have often thought since, that she must have looked as if the admission of the natural light of day would have struck her to dust" (GE 8, 62). The prophecy comes true: Miss Havisham tries to return to the sunlight - she tries to reject her monomania and act from love and pity - and in doing this she is destroyed. The bridal dress turning to patches of tinder makes Pip's thought literal.

Moreover, Miss Havisham's spell or prophecy in Chapter II is also fulfilled. She had said:

"When the ruin is complete ... and when they lay me dead, in my bride's dress on the bride's table - which shall be done, and which will be the finished curse upon him ..." (GE 11, 86)

Now:

By the surgeon's directions, her bed was carried into that room and laid upon the great table: which happened to be well suited to the dressing of her injuries. When I saw her again, an hour afterwards, she lay indeed where I had seen her strike her stick, and had heard her say that she would lie one day. (GE 49, 344)

The irony is that the spell should go on working after Miss Havisham has freed herself from the impulse that motivated it; that her dying body completes the image she had foreseen for it and lived towards, while she is inwardly changed. Dickens expresses this again in terms that are a new variation on the original Miss Havisham imagery - grotesque images, now, but filled with a strangely ethereal pathos:

Though every vestige of her dress was burnt, as they told me, she still had something of her old ghastly bridal appearance; for they had covered her to the throat with white cotton-wool, and as she lay with a white sheet loosely overlying that, the phantom air of something that had been and was changed was still upon her. (GE 49, 345)

Miss Havisham has undergone her final metamorphosis on earth, and lies there in a chrysalis-like state, before passing into her mysterious death.

8.

In this book (as indeed in all his works) Dickens watches very carefully how each of his characters moves into his death. The mode of dying is felt as a judgement on the dying man's life; it is the final summary of his fate, a process in which the spiritual product of a life-time's effort is left to express itself in a few isolated formulae and gestures. In the cases of Mrs. Joe and Miss Havisham, the process of death is slowed down by the author, and the dying woman is held for a while before death in a kind of limbo: she is

sealed off from the world of the living by the damage to her brain; yet she can pass back enigmatic messages that allow the living some sense of the state of her soul as it lies frozen in the cocoon of the death-process.

To portray such things required a poetic intuition that reached beyond our ordinary conception of what can still be understood as personality. Dickens could still recognize a moral and spiritual life even in a mind that had been reduced to automatism, or was holding itself incommunicado, or was hardly what we should call conscious, let alone responsible, at all. One imagines him as the poet who could show us a man in a coma, and make us see that comatose state as a state of living damnation or salvation, depending on the sufferer; or as a complex co-existence of the two within one man. As for madness, even the extreme forms involving the loss of integrated consciousness and of free will lie within his moral-poetic universe, and he may use insanity and its truncated utterances as a shorthand for revealing some fundamental posture, attitude, state - in an otherwise incommunicado soul.

It is not that Dickens can portray 'what it feels like to be mad', though I think he describes many states bordering on madness from the inside, and successfully; I am thinking of where he portrays madness from the outside, but always as the form of life of a *personality*. This view of the madman as a functioning personality, to be understood and judged *in the same terms* as the sane man (though not by the same rules), accounts for the humanity (and sometimes the humour) of Dickens's portrayals of insanity. The mental aberrations of his protagonists, even despite radical stylization, always have character. His portrayals of madness are not realistic, perhaps, but they are true to the kind of logic found in mental illness: the stylization (which is related to caricature) sharpens all that can be intensified by brevity - pathos, wit, energy - but it also lays bare the essential patterns of the complaint.

As a result, one questions and explores the odd manifestations of Miss

Havisham's aphasia with considerable interest. Before her consciousness disintegrates, she has a short period of clarity:

> There was a stage, that evening, when she spoke collectedly of what had happened, though with a certain terrible vitality. (GE 49, 345)

Here she seems to have regained, for a while, her almost aggressive grip on life. It is the only occasion on which she is able to transfer her old terrible vitality to her new, transformed existence.

> Towards midnight she began to wander in her speech, and after that it gradually set in that she said innumerable times in a low solemn voice, "What have I done!" And then, "When she first came, I meant to save her from misery like mine." And then, "Take the pencil and write under my name, 'I forgive her!' " She never changed the order of these three sentences, but she sometimes left out a word in one or other of them; never putting in another word, but always leaving a blank and going on to the next word. (GE 49, 345)

Miss Havisham's aphasia is probably due to physical causes, yet the humanity of Dickens's approach - his refusal to treat of her sickness as if it were a mechanical aberration in a machine - makes it possible to compare this passage with the analysis of a schizophrenic patient by R.D. Laing, a psychiatrist attempting to understand schizophrenia in existential terms. Here is the passage from Laing:

> In listening to Julie, it was often as though one were doing group psycho-therapy with the one patient. Thus I was confronted with a babble or jumble of quite disparate attitudes, feelings, expressions of impulse. The patient's intonations, gestures, mannerisms, changed their character from moment to moment. One may begin to recognize patches of speech, or fragments of behaviour cropping up at different times, which seem to belong together by reason of similarities or to cohere as behaviour by reason of certain stereotyped gestures or mannerisms. It seemed therefore that one was in the presence of various fragments, or incomplete elements, of different 'personalities' in operation at the one time. Her 'word-salad' seemed to be the result of a number of quasi-autonomous partial systems striving to give expression to themselves out of the same mouth at the same time. (RDL 11, 214-5)

> Another common simple instance was when 'she' would say something which 'she' would greet with derisive laughter (incongruity of thought and affect). Let us suppose that the statement emanates from system *A* and the laughter from system *B*. Then *A* says to me, 'She's a Royal Queen', while *B* laughs derisively.
>
> A good deal of what appeared to be something akin to 'jamming' went on. *A* would say something relatively coherently and then it would become jumbled up and *B* would start to speak. *A* would break in again to say: 'She (*B*) has stolen my tongue'. (RDL 11, 218)

We could explain Miss Havisham's speech along similar lines: Her personality has split into two quasi-autonomous impulses, one of which continues with modest, quiet determination (a determination so tenuously maintained that it is forced back into the gentle eccentricity of automatism) to assert the new choice of life that Miss Havisham has made; while the other, the counter-impulse, the dethroned demon of her old obsession, not permitted to appear as another voice or even to scramble the words of the first voice, must be satisfied with 'jamming' it by sponging away odd words as they reach her lips.

The words she speaks are a spell: the liturgy-like whole they form together makes of them a magic circle to protect Miss Havisham's purpose; they must be reiterated constantly in order to hold the last fragments of her personality together till it has been ferried over into death. Whatever may be said in medical terms about the state of Miss Havisham's personality, for the reader she dies as a person, and not as a thing.

> At about six o'clock of the morning, therefore, I leaned over her and touched her lips with mine, just as they said, not stopping for being touched, "Take the pencil and write under my name, 'I forgive her.' " (GE 49, 345)

In Pip's last contact with Miss Havisham, she reasserts her desire for forgiveness and Pip reasserts his forgiveness of her. But the distancing from personal contact, the detour, suggested by "Take the pencil and write under my name ..." reminds us of her earlier helpless isolation, and also of how far away she is now - and she is incapable of noticing or accepting Pip's kiss of forgiveness.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MAGWITCH THEME

The initial appearance of Magwitch and its effect on Pip

1.

Pip's first experience of Magwitch is in one sense diametrically opposed to his first experience of Satis House. In each case, what he encounters is a powerful adult passion, but it makes itself felt in different ways. Satis House is the flower of a perverse cultivation, it is like a work of art: everything in it is contrived by Miss Havisham so as to bear the traces of her passion, and the effect on Pip is so powerful as to be even hallucinatory. But in the case of Magwitch it is the absence of any kind of art that is so terrifying. The meeting with Magwitch is so difficult for Pip to come to terms with just because it is such a direct and primitive confrontation with man in his nakedness: man in the grip of such fundamental need and suffering that almost any form of civilized restraint has become irrelevant to him.

Without taking into account this phenomenon - man in his ultimately driven self, beyond civilization - we can hardly have the right to discuss man, or (for that matter) civilization. So Dickens begins his novel, which is to amount to nothing less than a judgement of human institutions as the products of human impulse, by presenting us with the phenomenon in the person of Magwitch. It would be a fair assumption for him to make, in doing this, that few of his readers would have had direct experience of man in such a state[1]. Moreover, he could assume that most of them would be loth to even

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1. The age was conscious of civilization as something that protected those individuals who benefited from it against direct experience of the harsher aspects of reality - as Mill's essay on *Civilization* shows: "One of the effects of civilization (not to say one of the ingredients in it) is, that the spectacle, and even the very idea, of pain, is kept more and more out of the sight of those classes who enjoy in their fulness the benefits of civilization." (JSM 178)

confess to the existence of such a man: they would act as though he belonged to a different order of reality, and a less urgent one, simply because he came from outside their social world. Of course this holds good for us in our time too. The opening chapter, then, while being the start of a long and painful education for Pip, begins our own education at the hands of the author too.

Dickens chooses to show us Magwitch first through the eyes of a child. He does this not only in order to emphasize the horror of the encounter by reminding us of the child's weakness. A child has strengths, too; in particular his capacity for learning is strong; if we can see by the medium of *his* mental language, which is a language of signs and symbols, we can learn much from his insight.

Just as in the case of his response to Miss Havisham, one of the great beauties of these opening chapters is the demonstration of how much Pip the child is capable of understanding, and understanding sympathetically. Adults live to a great extent by evasion. They take the edge off any extraordinary and disturbing experience by telling themselves that they do not really need to understand it. They treat what encounters them from outside their accustomed social world as though it belonged to a less urgent order of reality, a world other than that in which they will need to navigate. For a child, however, the reality which he will need to live with is potentially present in everything that happens to him. Anaesthetized areas have not yet had a chance to form. The activity of appraising the world outside him is so basic that it continues under no matter what stress of fear or strangeness. There is that in him which takes whatever happens to him as it comes.

Dickens makes us feel that there is a quiet centre in Pip, steadily observant, that sees Magwitch simply as a man - a new kind of man, certainly, but no less of a normal responsibility (requiring manners and thoughtfulness) for all that. This quiet self speaks at moments when the direct pressure of

Magwitch's bullying lets up. We hear it when Pip politely, if falteringly, wishes Magwitch goodnight (GE 1, 18), or worries about his having caught the ague (GE 3, 28). And Magwitch invariably responds to this Pip by starting to behave like a man and not like a driven animal - joking, now, viewing his situation with irony.

In discussing these opening chapters, I shall be concerned primarily with what Pip understands in Magwitch. I shall try to decipher his mental language as it registers Magwitch's plight. This means ignoring one important aspect of Pip's response: his actual fear of Magwitch as someone who might harm him personally. I am more interested in Pip's fear of Magwitch as an embodiment of weakness rather than of power. I shall also pay less attention than is really due to the feelings of guilt caused in Pip by his dealings with Magwitch - simply because this aspect has already been dealt with by Mrs. Leavis.

Pip's perceptions concerning Magwitch register on his mind in symbolic form, the kind of symbolism that comes naturally to his childish mind. This symbolism connects Magwitch with the extremes of human suffering, the energies of hunger, sickness, huntedness, violence, death. Naked human suffering, arousing as it does the intolerable emotional combination of pity and revulsion, is at the centre of Pip's trauma. In the opening page of the book, Dickens seems to prepare Pip for just this confrontation - to make him, for the moment, particularly open to this horror.

2.

In certain African tribes, members do not become persons merely by being born - not by a long chalk. In *Great Expectations*, Dickens seems to hold a comparable view of the birth of the personality. He describes how Pip, a boy

old enough to read the names on tombstones, has for the first time a vivid experience of being a person. This spiritual experience is cemented by the meeting with the convict, an initiatory baptism that will colour Pip's sense of his own identity throughout the rest of his life. Just before he is interrupted by the terrible voice of the convict, Pip has his "first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things". To quote further:

> At such a time I found out for certain, that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Batholomew, Abraham, Tobias,and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates,with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip. (GE 1, 15)

What constitutes the experience - the self-discovery - described here? It is difficult to bring it down to a single factor. A sense of identity is involved, together with a sense of the identity of things outside oneself; also a sense of where one fits in oneself (characteristically, Pip gets this indirectly, by way of the tombstones). Perhaps a sense of a new autonomy must be involved. One becomes in a new way responsible for oneself.

That Dickens is speaking of something real one can attest from one's own memory of such a moment - except that in real life it is more likely to be a series of such moments, a discovery made and lost and made again - the novelist has the right to compress such a series into *one* moment. The significant thing, for this novel, is that by the time he counts as a person Pip already has a past, a name and a situation - none of which he can be held responsible for. If a man first becomes aware of himself as hungry, and is indeed to feel hungry all his life, as Magwitch does, then his hunger may have its origin in a part of his life over which he has no control, not having been rightly speaking a person at all. To what extent is a man responsible, then, for the consequences of his hunger?

I bring Magwitch in here, because Magwitch's account (in Chapter 42) of his early life is in many ways a mirror of Pip's own. He says: "I've no more notion where I was born than you have - if so much." (GE 42, 297) Like Pip, he has his moment of becoming aware of himself: in his case, a-thieving turnips. Like Pip, he had been left very cold, this being perhaps one cause of the coming to awareness. Like Pip, who gives his family name on the authority (partly) of his father's tombstone, he has no particular conviction of his name's being a part of himself. "I know'd my name to be Magwitch, chrisen'd Abel. How did I know it? Much as I know'd the birds' names in the hedges to be chaffinch, sparrer, thrush. I might have thought it was all lies together, only as the birds' names come out true, I supposed mine did." (GE 42, 297) Of course, in all these instances, there is a light opened on our common human fate. What the two characters share in particular is the loneliness of their childhood - a loneliness which, in Pip's case, Dickens exaggerates at first in order to get his effect - and the sense of a passive fate having been theirs. Magwitch says: "I've been locked up, as much as a silver tea-kettle. I've been carted here and carted there, and put out of this town and put out of that town, and stuck in the stocks, and whipped and worried and drove." (GE 42, 297) This feeling of passivity seems frequently as intense in Pip's frustrated account of his own childhood.

In fact, one of the first things we become aware of in Pip is his sense of being at the receiving end of things.

> ... and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip. (GE 1, 15)

3.

The above passage is more important than is immediately obvious. What I should like to call the 'pattern' of it recurs significantly often in the novel. I intend to follow up the ripples it sends through the novel, noting the new currents of meaning which it enters into and which it swells. But first it is necessary to consider what kind of activity of Dickens's mind it is which enables him to create or discover his poetic images and then helps him to develop them. In the part of the book dealing with Miss Havisham and Satis House it was permissible to discuss the network of symbolism as though it were something that Dickens had *contrived* consciously - this will not do in the case of the Magwitch strand, a region of the book where we are always in the presence of a more profound activity.

In *The Hidden Order of Art* (AE), Anton Ehrenzweig describes two levels of organization in a painting. There is the surface organization of rational relationships and of comparatively simple articulated forms, that can be consciously grasped, forms that as he puts it have 'good gestalt'. But behind this organization lies the more complete and subtler organization that can only be perceived unconsciously, but that gives the picture its depth. The second organization is dependent on factors such as brushstroke and 'handwriting'; it is the field of ineffable relationships that creates what we call 'pictorial space'; it is the part of the picture which is destroyed in restoration. These two levels of organization in a picture are the products of two levels of mental activity in the artist. The lower, more complete, irrational level of organization is dependent on the artist's ability to surrender himself to the unconscious workings of primary fantasy and undifferentiated field scanning: it has its origins in prerational associations and in the organization of a way of seeing that precedes conscious gestalt formation. In the second stage of work the artist consciously differentiates, creates rational, geometrical order, makes his intuitions available to conscious perception. This second

stage always entails a loss of richness; this is why it is so important that traces of the original, consciously unmanageable, total order should remain in the final work.

A similar analysis has been made by D.W. Harding of the process of verbalization. In *The Hinterland of Thought* (DWH) he shows us something of the journey by which impulses and non-verbalized thoughts proceed towards rational and literal expression, together with exact metaphor - towards what he calls 'discursive statement'. He continues to show how the most inspired poetry frequently emerges from a stage earlier than that of discursive statement, a stage of semi-conscious control, of prerational order.

In my opinion, such insights have not been used enough in the discussion of symbolism as it manifests itself in the novel. Critics have tended to see the symbol as belonging only to the conscious, contrived level of the novel's form. We are told of the symbols that dominate Dickens's late works - the dust heaps in *Our Mutual Friend*, the prison in *Little Dorrit* - but what is not emphasised is that these symbols not only stand above the novels' themes as a constant presence, but also permeate those themes in such a way that the symbol itself is tested, fragmented, fused with new material, enlarged, and baffled. The symbol becomes a protean, changeable thing, entering into unexpected alliances, extending itself unpredictably, blossoming beyond the reach of merely conscious control. It is not so much that the symbol sums up an insight; more importantly, it becomes a dynamic thing, a *creator* of insights. In its growth - and it grows, often, in its function as a simple sensuous image, not obviously connected with a symbolic function - it develops in spite of itself into the centre of a network of significant relationships.

In this, Dickens resembles no writer so much as Shakespeare. Whereas a writer such as Dante makes his symbolic poetry 'come right' by always choosing what he convinces us is the only exact, the only possible, image, Shakespeare often seems to us to begin a soliloquy with random words, an image of obscure latent intensity. We feel he might have begun on a different word, a different

image, and the whole course of the speech would have been changed, though Shakespeare's work on it would still have made it a successful solution of the artistic problem. For once the word, the image has been chosen, there is a commitment to it on the profounder levels, and the final network of imagery is tight and revelatory and complete, the matter in hand fully and suggestively dealt with.

Dickens has a way of appearing harmless and opportunistic on the surface - as though he were after no more than a piece of light comedy or thrilling melodrama - while he is in fact making profound and potentially alarming statements about the human mind or the nature of society. The bland exterior has misled many critics - particularly nineteenth-century critics - into speaking of Dickens as though they had merely a surface charm to deal with. It is a misapprehension of this kind that leads Garis to speak of Dickens's theatrical sleight-of-hand. In fact it is only because Dickens's formulations release so much buried perception from the reader's unconscious (and from his own) that his comedy is so explosive, his characterization often so disturbing. For instance, he makes much use of infantile body-imagery - often (to the post-Freudian mind) unmistakably sexual.

As an example of how a simple comic device can become truly rich by releasing a wealth of buried psychological perception, we can take the use Dickens makes of Joe's hat on the occasion when he goes to visit Pip in his gentlemanly lodgings (Chapter 27). The references to the hat work up to a frenzied slapstick climax:

> With his good honest face all glowing and shining, and his hat put down on the floor between us, he caught both my hands and worked them straight up and down, as if I had been the last-patented Pump.
> "I am glad to see you, Joe. Give me your hat."
> But Joe, taking it up carefully with both his hands, like a bird's-nest with eggs in it, wouldn't hear of parting with that piece of property, and persisted in standing talking over it in a most uncomfortable way. (GE 27, 193)

> Having borne this flattering testimony to the merits of our dwelling-place, and having incidentally shown this tendency to call me "Sir", Joe, being invited to sit down to table, looked all round the room for a suitable spot on which to deposit his hat - as if it were only on some very few rare

substances in nature that it could find a resting-place - and ultimately stood it on an extreme corner of the chimney-piece, from which it ever afterwards fell off at intervals. (GE 27, 195)

Here Joe's hat tumbled off the mantelpiece, and he started out of his chair and picked it up, and fitted it to the same exact spot. As if it were an absolute point of good breeding that it should tumble off again soon. (GE 27, 195)

I really believe Joe would have prolonged this word (mightily expressive to my mind of some architecture that I know) into a perfect Chorus, but for his attention being providentially attracted by his hat, which was toppling. Indeed, it demanded from him a constant attention, and a quickness of eye and hand, very like that exacted by wicket-keeping. He made extraordinary play with it, and showed the greatest skill; now, rushing at it and catching it neatly as it dropped; now, merely stopping it midway, beating it up, and humouring it in various parts of the room and against a good deal of the pattern of the paper on the wall, before he felt it safe to close with it; finally, splashing it into the slop-basin, where I took the liberty of laying hands upon it. (GE 27, 195-6)

Of course what these quotations show goes deeper than mere slapstick; it is a dramatization of Joe's unease in the 'gentlemanly' Pip's presence. We can see how accurate and penetrating this dramatization is if we stop to consider just what Joe's hat signifies for him in this situation.

To start with hats in general - here is part of Jung's interpretation of a dream:

DREAM:

The dreamer is at a social gathering. On leaving, he puts on a stranger's hat instead of his own.

The hat, as a covering for the head, has the general sense of something that epitomizes the head. Just as in summing up we bring ideas "under one head" (*unter einen Hut*), so the hat, as a sort of leading idea, covers the whole personality and imparts its own significance to it. Coronation endows the ruler with the divine nature of the sun, the doctor's hood bestows the dignity of a scholar, and a stranger's hat imparts a strange nature. (CGJ 47)

The hat theme, we realise, has been used often in comedy. Even the fat, short clown and the tall, thin clown who exchange hats are doing more than going through a routine of visual slapstick. They are experimentally exchanging personalities. The result is a grotesquerie, like those produced in the game of Tops and Tails. As it is a convention that clowns should seem to be enjoying what they are doing, the two clowns should be seen to be participating

in the sheer joy of acting - that is, the joy of being someone else while remaining oneself. Like all conventions, this one is reversible, and a sad clown might reflect the agony of having to be another while remaining himself.

In *Waiting for Godot* the famous hat 'business' is given a pathetic edge because the hats are nearly identical - both are bowlers. When the actors exchange hats in an elaborate pantomime, their experimentations hardly amount to anything. In the context of this play, it is easy enough to don another man's personality - but it doesn't help. Personality has been reduced to a minimum, to a mere matter of aesthetic choice. The hat you wear is a matter of choice; you may put it on at whim. You may be earnestly searching when you do so, but you will be disappointed by the banality of the result. You cannot be much transformed, because not much of a choice of selves awaits you - people are so much the same.

In all these cases, of course, the spectator is affected without giving himself a full account of what he is watching. We may assume that at the moment of the release of laughter all that he has previously observed about the relationship between people and hats - observed without bringing it to consciousness - rises up in him as a discovery too momentary to be analysed, and triggers off the physical reaction. But this physical reaction is subtle - the laughter may be happy or a bit rueful, depending on the nature of the forgotten perceptions that are released in the flash of humour. And here we have an indication of why Dickens's comedy is so explosive, his characterization often so disturbing. His verbal formulations, his imagery, the games that he plays with the people and objects that lie in his hands, are such as to fire flashes of intuition, and these flashes are due to a release of long-buried perceptions.

Let us return to Joe. The 'spiel' that Joe makes with his hat is finer comedy than any of the examples of hat-borrowing I have mentioned because it is both more particular in its meaning and more fertile in its development. The hat that Joe wears is another example of a 'strange personality' being donned. Joe does not normally wear a hat: he is wearing a hat because he is going to

visit a gentleman. The hat stands for a particular 'personality', or 'persona', or 'mask'. It represents the 'personality' Joe has settled on as a suitable disguise to wear on his visit to Pip.

Joe is either too proud or too realistic to meet Pip in his natural self. Joe is in fact extremely nervous of losing the protection that this false self, which he has determined on in his own mind as the suitable self, can give him. So Joe clings to his hat, and won't be parted from it. Pip makes repeated attempts to have it put aside, in exactly the same way as he would like to have Joe put aside his artificial self and face him man to man. (Of course, Pip is not prepared, for his part, to do without his own artificial position of power.) Finally, he succeeds in carrying off the offending hat, and this is felt as a kind of rape of Joe's personality.

Of course, the device of the artificial self that Joe decides on is disastrous from the start. He had intended it to be otherwise. He had intended his false self to be a kind of mediator between him and Pip. He had wanted to meet Pip half way, and use his artificial self as a means by which he could establish what limited communication with Pip was still possible. And this is the way he tries to use his hat - as a kind of mediator. He speaks across it, shakes hands over it. But its effect is actually to stand between the two of them as an obstacle, making Joe's handshake highly artificial and uncomfortable.

Joe is too spontaneous a person, and too untrained in social subtleties, to be at his ease with the social persona he has created for himself. Though he holds on to his hat desperately, he is not happy with it, and he has to make sure that it keeps reminding him of its existence. Moreover, when it comes to the point, Joe's projected self-for-visiting-a-gentleman is inadequate - it doesn't really come up to the realities of the situation. (Perhaps this is why he has such difficulty in finding a spot in Pip's rooms where his hat will 'fit'.) He can't make his conception of how he should be with Pip 'stick'.

Nor will his hat 'stick' - only the most complicated juggling techniques will keep it from subsiding to the floor. Eventually Joe's whole consciousness is taken up in a kind of dramatic dialogue with his hat - his other self - and this leaves him little chance to communicate with Pip.

Now the point I'm anxious to make is that if Dickens had analysed the scene as I have done, he would never have been able to write it. My analysis, anyway, does an injustice to the subtlety and unpredictability with which the scene moves - and I think that this would necessarily be the case with any analysis, no matter how delicate. Dickens must have worked more spontaneously. Certainly he must have started with the perception that Joe has turned his hat into an entirely personal symbol - that he looks to it as something which can remind him of how he has determined to behave - no, to be - in Pip's presence. Also Dickens must have had an intuitive sense of why the hat was a symbol for him, the author, as well as for Joe - fundamentally he must have known that he was using it as a symbol covering and revealing the psychological meaning of Joe's behaviour. But once this symbolism was established as an underlying guiding principle, Dickens would have been able to manipulate the hat almost as unthinkingly and spontaneously (always unconsciously regardful of its special meaning) as Joe does himself. He would simply need to imagine how Joe would behave with his hat.

All his experience of how people behave with hats in general would have come to his aid there. And Dickens's mind, like that of a superb actor, must have been an incomparable storehouse of such impressions and perceptions, a storehouse incorporating also the elementary and unreflected intuitions of childhood. One imagines that these memories lay just beyond his consciousness and were merely waiting for some dramatic idea (perhaps merely entertaining on the surface of it, like the 'hat idea' here) to liberate them, and liberate also the psychological perception stored in them. The superficial 'theatrical' intent could then work in harmony with the more profound, half-conscious

psychological intuitions, and supply the right kind of indirect control over them.

If Dickens had not worked in this spontaneously intuitive fashion, his comic use of the hat could not have developed with such wonderful psychological lucidity, a lucidity that could only be confused by the clumsiness of rational analysis. Dickens could also not have launched out on imagery that seems to defy rational analysis altogether: for instance his remark that Joe holds his hat "like a bird's-nest with eggs in it". This image convinces one entirely - it has the same lucid dramatic logic as everything else about the hat. But who will put into words what it means? Dickens goes further than this, however. Once having created the image, he uses it once more in a quite unexpected way:

> "Why yes," said Joe, lowering his voice, "he /Wopsle/ 's left the Church, and went into the play-acting. Which the play-acting have likeways brought him to London along with me. And his wish were," said Joe, getting the bird's-nest under his left arm for the moment and groping in it for an egg with his right; "if no offence, as I would 'and you that."
>
> I took what Joe gave me, and found it to be the crumpled playbill of a small metropolitan theatre, announcing the first appearance, in that very week, of "the celebrated Provincial Amateur of Roscian renown, whose unique performance in the highest tragic walk of our National Bard has lately occasioned so great a sensation in local dramatic circles." (GE 27, 194)

Joe's method of producing his bit of news is - down to the smallest detail, and most inventively - in keeping with his whole behaviour during the scene. The bird's nest hat now becomes a place you pull surprises out of! Such fertile pursuit of an idea can only come from the spontaneous play of a mind of genius.

Now strangely enough even so slight a matter as the slapstick dance that Joe performs with his hat has its ramifications elsewhere in the novel. I am thinking of the scene in which Wemmick 'plays' with the plaster-casts on Jaggers's shelves. (See pp VI.17-22) This has the appearance of a dance with skulls, and whereas Joe fumbles with his hat, Wemmick is expert and sure in his handling of death and the grotesque, the grim insignia of his profession. The connection between the two scenes, which was not necessarily worked out by Dickens, suggests that in both Dickens was exploring the tension between the

private individuality and the persona or mask that social circumstances sometimes force it to wear. In contrast to Joe, Wemmick demonstrates an expertise in managing his public persona that is well-practised, and highly-developed - though a little too neat and mechanical for one to feel that it is entirely satisfactory.

In short, we soon discover that a sequence of visual slapstick may lead us right down into one of the novel's most profound themes: the problem of the individual's adaptation to social demands on his personality. We need not be afraid of over-interpreting Dickens: his intelligence works in such complete harmony with his intuition that there is virtually no point at which we can say his work has become arbitrary, or that it has only superficial significance.

4.

I left Chapter I with a quotation describing how Pip becomes aware of himself in relation to the scene around him:

> At such a time I found out for certain, that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; ... and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip." (GE 1, 15)

At first, the detail of the writing in this passage, the images and the way they are related to one another, seems merely to serve the creation of a mood. But Dickens goes on to use it as though he were the composer who found that the whole of his symphony was latently contained in his first theme. The way the world is disposed around Pip forms a pattern which will recur again in the book much as certain 'patterns' recur in De Quincey's imaginative perceptions of the world and in his dreams.

The passage in which this pattern is embodied must contain a wealth of what the composer calls 'material' for Dickens to want to return to it so frequently. 'Material' in the musical sense would refer to relationships between notes, relationships that are significant to the composer. In the Dickens passage the 'material' consists of relationships between images, and in particular the relationship between the figure of Pip and the world around him. Literature differs from music in that these relationships have a *symbolic* significance. Some of the significances can be perceived and analysed at this stage already: others will only become plain as the 'pattern' is used in new forms and related to other 'material'.

The passage tells us that Pip becomes aware of his identity precisely at a moment when it is being shaken apart by his own shivers, when he is hardly an identity at all but "a small bundle of shivers" trying to hold itself together. The attack that is making him "grow afraid" is one launched by his whole situation - "growing afraid of it all" - the whole combination of churchyard, marshes, river and sea, though it is in the sea that the real origin is of what causes his shivers, the wind that rushes up and attacks him. The sea is the "distant savage lair" where the wild beast of the wind is bred, and also the wild beast of the convict. But the river and the marshes afford Pip no protection, any more than the graveyard with his family in it does - they have nothing in them to stop the assault of the wind, any more than Pip's home has anything in it to protect him, vulnerable as he is, from the psychological assault of a harrowing experience. Here, where he lives, the faraway and the disastrous can reach him direct - here is where the outcast must storm up from limbo to re-enter the city that will hide him - to such a boy as Pip in his misery and loneliness the nakedly hungry man, that civilization has cast out of its consciousness, must reveal himself, so that he may re-enter the mind of the novel-reader and enlarge his understanding of humanity.

Indeed the land here melts imperceptibly into the outer, shadowy sea. The river is a "low leaden line" - a thin border that partakes already of the background - and it already hints at Magwitch's colour, iron grey. The significance of this shore grows in further descriptions. When Pip watches the convict go off after his first encounter with him, he once more has an impression of the marshes:

> The marshes were just a long, black, horizontal line then, as I stopped to look after him; and the river was just another horizontal line, not nearly so broad nor yet so black; and the sky was just a row of long, angry, red lines and dense black lines intermixed. (GE 1, 18)

This passage affords an excellent example of how Dickens's image-patterns develop, recurring in new forms. Here the earlier landscape is glimpsed again, but it is now reduced to an extreme of abstraction: it is seen as a succession of horizontal lines. The darkness, and the starkness of his recent experience, have simplified the landscape for Pip, and made it extreme. What we have here is a landscape of the edge of the world.

Dickens's radical simplification of the landscape, this carrying of it to one of its possible extremes, paradoxically by stripping down allows new elements to enter. One of these is destined to make its appearance now - in some corresponding form - whenever the pattern recurs. This is the fiery red in the sky - "a row of long, angry, red lines and dense black lines intermixed". Angry heavens are traditionally - and, we imagine, for Pip specially - a sign of an angry God. The edge-of-the-world landscape carries hints also of the *end* of the world, and the Day of Judgement. In other words, the new element brought in by the new symbol is the concept of judgement, which men find so awesome and sublime that they say it derives from a deity; but which, all things considered, when encountered in its human confusion by a small boy, is inevitably disturbing. It is more than disturbing to Pip - it is sinister. The angry sky lends the extra horror of a kind of sublimity to the two objects that stand up in the landscape and break the horizontals - "the only two black things in all the prospect that /seem/ to be standing upright." (GE 1, 18) The first of these is an old gibbet which for Pip is haunted by the ghost of a pirate, and where

he expects Magwitch to "hook himself up again". (GE 1, 18) The other is the beacon, which is described as being "like an unhooped cask upon a pole" (GE 1, 18). Those accustomed to Dickens's games of disguised imagery will recognise in the latter a nightmare symbol for a hanged man.

The approach to the shore of the sea, to the edge of the world, is an approach to the edge of humanity, to a place where a man ceases to be treated as human - perhaps, in his need, ceases to *be* human. Conversely, Magwitch's foray into the land and his meeting with Pip are a momentary re-education for him in what it is to be human: the scenes that follow are specially moving because they depict closely how Magwitch switches backwards and forwards between two possibilities. At one moment he appears as a man who has become the impersonal expression of his needs; at another he shows the elements of a full and balanced humanity, such as humour, fantasy, a touchingly misplaced sense of companionship - even (under Pip's influence) a kind of courtesy.

5.

The extreme pole of Magwitch's dehumanization can be seen in the following paragraph:

> The man, after looking at me for a moment, turned me upside-down, and emptied my pockets. There was nothing in them but a piece of bread. When the church came to itself - for he was so sudden and strong that he made it go head over heels before me, and I saw the steeple under my feet - when the church came to itself, I say, I was seated on a high tombstone, trembling, while he ate the bread ravenously. (GE 1, 16)

In treating Pip like a dustbin, Magwitch shows complete impersonality; his action is quite indifferent to Pip, not concerning itself with whether he is a live or a dead object. His absent-mindedness is as complete as Pip's confusion and terror. That is if we can call absent-minded an action that is so purposeful.

At any rate, during the process his mind, his consciousness is absent. Perhaps we can see here one reason why Magwitch has later completely forgotten his terrorization of Pip. At least in this case, he has been acting as a sleepwalker.

However, let's not forget what's been happening to Pip meanwhile, who has within a few moments undergone this metamorphosis into a dustbin and back into a little boy sitting on a gravestone. His momentary loss of self is rendered through the uncharacteristic behaviour of the village church (a 'landmark' in his world): its somersault and its return to perpendicularity - "when the church came to itself, I say, I was seated ..." And the fact that Pip is now seated on a tombstone with his feet off the ground suggests that he has made the transition into a new kind of world, where the phantom of death holds special powers.[1]

Moreover, what has happened to Pip (who has been seized bodily and inverted) must be regarded under the heading of a humiliation. To humiliate someone is to rob him of his confidence in certain beliefs he holds as to what he is. Why does Magwitch's approach succeed so thoroughly in making Pip lose his faith in the fact that he is a 'nice' boy, from a 'nice' family, who can never have anything intrinsically to do with convicts? For Pip feels he has been completely alienated from his family. He no longer belongs to that existence.

Here we must ask ourselves some questions about class, I think: class in that area where it is precarious and hard-won, that is in the middle classes, where mobility of class is possible. What did one hope to win for oneself by moving up the social scale in one's estimation of oneself? What was one losing when one started to become déclassé? We need to go a little deeper here than considerations of power, wealth, or prestige. Obviously this is a huge theme, ultimately embracing the mystery of the whole project of European man. No ordinary person could hope to fathom it. However, we can gain certain lines

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1. As a curious confirmation of Dickens's poetic imagination, we find some of the elements of this scene repeated in a poem by Ted Hughes. This is the poem *Oedipus Crow* in the volume *Crow*(TH 35). I quote some extracts:

(Footnote continued on p.V.19)

of approach from looking at Lawrence's various studies of the middle class - in *The Lost Girl* especially, and in many of the stories.

P.V.18 (Footnote 1 contd.)

A gravestone fell on his foot
And took root -
He bit through the bone and he fled.

.....

And he ran, cheered by the sound of his foot and its echo

.....

One-legged, gutless and brainless, the rag of himself -

So Death tripped him easy
And held him up with a laugh, only just alive.

.....

Crow dangled from his one claw - corrected.

A warning.

Ted Hughes's genius often limits itself in *Crow* to the inspired collection of obscurely linked images into an expressive pattern. For my purpose I can single out the following, which are also present as part of an expressive pattern in the scene built up by Dickens: upside-down, one-leg, held-by-one-leg, held-by-one-leg-by-a-tombstone, captive, fugitive, depersonalization, humiliation. Unfortunately the Hughes poem does not help us much with the interpretation of the Dickens scene, as the connections made in the poem remain merely intuitive - unclarified by intellect.

There we find that class is, among other things,a matter of individualization. To rise in class is partly to mark oneself off more clearly from the people around one - and not only from one's social inferiors, but from other people in general. This is noticed and resented by the class one is leaving as 'trying to be different'. Holding one's class is largely a matter of guarding these differences against decline. To become déclassé is to start losing one's grip on what makes for one's individualism, usually without the ability to readjust satisfactorily to a life of less spiky privacy.

The matter is of course complicated, as Lawrence shows. The classical Laurentian situation is one where the factors making for special individuality have become rigid and lifeless, class a mere matter of gentility. Lawrence then depicts how the greater and broader forces of life enable the alienated individual to overcome the sterility of his frozen separateness, and to re-enter the body of man creatively.

The drive towards greater individualism can however be a healthy one, a justified idealism - though it is an idealism which puts great pressures on those practising it. It seems to me that in the Victorian era the maintenance of an ideal of inviolable individuality involved the greatest possible elimination of the body from the foreground of one's consciousness.

But what is one to make of the physicality of 'low' Victorian humour: the Punch-and-Judy performances, the penny peep-shows, Dickens's own farce? I would say that there is a strong anti-class ingredient in such things, rendered the more necessary by the importance of class outside one's relaxed moments. The body is that in which we are all the same. So physical farce is a vicarious return to repressed aggressive impulses, but also a reunion with the body of mankind.

We might consider why Pickwick's implied indignation is so funny in the following scene - he has innocently involved himself in the election at Eatanswill, and is making his way on to the hustings:

How or by what means it became mixed up with the other procession, and how it was ever extricated from the confusion consequent thereupon, is more than we can undertake to describe, inasmuch as Mr. Pickwick's hat was knocked over his eyes, nose, and mouth, by one poke of a Buff flag-staff, very early in the proceedings. He describes himself as being surrounded on every side, when he could catch a glimpse of the scene, by angry and ferocious countenances, by a vast cloud of dust, and by a dense crowd of combatants. He represents himself as being forced from the carriage by some unseen power, and being personally engaged in a pugilistic encounter; but with whom, or how, or why, he is wholly unable to state. (PP 13, 170)

The point is that for a gentleman a fist-fight is an extremely personal way of being involved with another man. One would at least like to see who one's opponent is. To be involved without knowing with whom, or why - that is a case of perverse fate simply carrying things too far. How can one maintain one's dignity when one becomes the impersonal object of political passion?

The rest of the scene, in which Pickwick, standing on the platform, is singled out by the crowd as an object of scurrilous verbal abuse, continues the theme of his utter helplessness in the situation he has strayed into. His respectability as a middle-class gentleman, his dignity as a private man[1], are outrageously offended. But the passage given above, in which Pickwick's privacy is transgressed upon in *physical* terms, has a particularly Victorian flavour.

More acutely, such physical violence as Magwitch exercises on Pip must be felt as a denial of everything but one's bodily self: an intolerable intimacy, a tearing-down, a negation of both one's superiority and one's individuality. Moreover it's a kind of negation which can't help but destroy one's own confidence in these qualities as a real part of oneself - a true humiliation.

Magwitch has treated Pip as a physical object, ignoring his humanity. And he will continue the treatment with mechanical rhythmicality throughout the interview, by 'tilting' his victim:

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1. The whole function of the Pickwick Club is to give its members a sense of private dignity in an over-populated world by upholding the fiction that they are all distinguished individuals. The book proceeds to show that this fiction is unnecessary. Mr. Pickwick - for one - has his own kind of individual dignity, despite his mediocrity.

"You get me a file." He tilted me again. "And you get me wittles." He tilted me again. "You bring 'em both to me." He tilted me again. "Or I'll have your heart and liver out." He tilted me again. (GE 1, 17)

And *by* treating Pip as an object and not a person, Magwitch is tearing down all the rather flimsy threads of meaning, belonging, and identity that we had watched the child tying together with difficulty on the first page of the book; he has made non-existent what might have held the two of them apart.

From here there is little distance to travel before Pip is made his accomplice. And remember at what a profound level Pip feels this sense of being an accomplice. He feels that he belongs to the convict and not to the people at home - not even to Joe. Later, he will be haunted by the feeling that he belongs to the convict's world and not to the world of Estella. This problem is only solved for him when he finds out that the convict's world and Estella's world are the same world - that is, when he manages to relate them.

6.

The claiming of Pip for an accomplice is a more subtle thing than the mere breaking down of his resistances. We can even pin down the moment when the idea first takes hold of Magwitch's mind and, as if irresistibly, conveys itself to Pip.

"Who d'ye live with - supposin' you're kindly let to live, which I han't made up my mind about?"

"My sister, sir - Mrs. Joe Gargery - wife of Joe Gargery, the blacksmith, sir."

"Blacksmith, eh?" said he. And he looked down at his leg.

After darkly looking at his leg and at me several times, he came closer to my tombstone, took me by both arms, tilted me back as far as he could hold me; so that his eyes looked most powerfully down into mine, and mine looked most helplessly up into his. (GE 1, 16-17)

"And he looked down at his leg" is a sentence that might have been put in italics. It has that kind of emphasis. Of course, Dickens needs no italics. The form and rhythm of the sentence, the mysterious "And", are enough to convey how

sinister this look is for the boy, and to make of it, in the hands of the mature narrator, a tool of humour. Grim, grotesque, anti-idealistic humour, that's like a nudge in the ribs. The cruel and yet somehow reassuring infantile humour of the Punch-and-Judy show.

What is happening - sinister moment! - is that Magwitch is making a connection, not yet clear to Pip, between Joe's social function (that is, Pip's identity in the world) and - whatever it is about his leg.

Pip is painfully conscious of Magwitch's ironed leg. This feeling comes to the surface when he describes Compeyson to him on their second meeting:

> "Dressed like you, you know, only with a hat," I explained, trembling; "and - and" - I was very anxious to put this delicately - "and with - the same reason for wanting to borrow a file." (GE 3, 29)

Pip behaves throughout as though Magwitch's ironed leg were an amputation.

Pip is not primarily conscious of the leg-iron as a leg-iron. His attention is drawn to the limp itself as being something that has gone wrong with Magwitch's very integrity as a human being. A limp is a jerky, persistent tic- the body, once it ceases, for some reason, to function smoothly, develops the diabolic and comical independent perversity of a mal-functioning machine. Magwitch's limp is a dehumanization of his leg.

One imagines that if Pip would think of the iron separately at all, he would think of it as a kind of seal to prove that the leg doesn't belong to the convict any more, but to other forces. After all it is through this ankle of his that he is being tugged at from outside himself, as he makes his way through the graves after their first meeting.

> At the same time, he hugged his shuddering body in both his arms - clasping himself as if to hold himself together - and limped towards the low church wall. As I saw him go, picking his way among the nettles, and among the brambles that bound the green mounds, he looked in my young eyes as if he were eluding the hands of the dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in.
>
> When he came to the low church wall, he got over it like a man whose legs were numbed and stiff, and then turned round to look for me. When I saw him turning, I set my face towards home, and made the best use of my legs. (GE 1, 18)

Intuitively aware that Magwitch's whole being is in the grip of the feelings

of a hunted man, which causes his every movement to be involuntarily also a movement of caution, avoidance, evasion - and centring this total impression (with the primitive logic of a child) in Magwitch's limp and his dragging feet - Pip has a vision of the convict that is rich in latent comprehension. So the people in the graves have a claim on Magwitch? If so, what is it?

Imprison someone and you take something of his self away from him. What do you take away? His freedom of movement. And his freedom of movement is his legs. But can legs, a part of one's body, of one's self, be given into another's power; be signed over, sold,and parcelled out? Only to the death that lays in wait for our corpses.

Then fear imprisonment as you would fear death! For it is giving a part of yourself to that negation.

This is not customary logic. But it is, I think, Dickens's logic here, and is not so far off from the logic which we use in our unconscious, and which modern psychoanalysis tries to understand. It is a logic which might help us to reckon up the cost of what a society's restrictions exact from the individual, and so to determine just how much we are prepared to let it do to us.

If Magwitch, in common with other limping men in folklore and literature, carries with him the shadowy suggestion of the gelded man of our dreams, this shadowy fear would act as an intensification of Dickens's argument. And surely there is some suggestion of this fear in the meaningfulness for Pip of the glance in "And he looked down at his leg" (GE 1, 17). According to Steven Marcus (in a convincing analysis of *Barnaby Rudge*) Dickens uses just this symbolism in discussing master-servant relationships: "Without putting any fine construction on it - since Dickens did not - Sim feels that he has been castrated, and by Varden, his 'master' ..." (SM 185) And certainly the suggestion that imprisonment is a form of castration does not lie far outside the scope of the symbolism that one can actually point to.

Of course society, when it imprisons a man, does not claim to be doing

anything so dreadful as to be selling his legs to death - let alone worse. This is why death is sly and devious in laying claim to the property that has been so secretly and ambiguously, so dubiously transferred into its power:

> he looked in my young eyes as if he were eluding the hands of the dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in.

When Magwitch first appears to Pip he starts up from among the graves; and when he goes off he limps towards the old gibbet "as if he were the pirate come to life, and come down, and going back to hook himself up again." (GE 1, 18) From the first, Pip's contact with Magwitch (his contact with the world of crime and punishment) is a contact with humanly-ordained death.

The theme of Death laying claim to the living is a theme Dickens has used before. In *Bleak House* there are at least two personifications of Death. The more famous one is Mr. Vholes, whose significance is analysed by Q.D. Leavis (FRL & QDL 164-5) when she gives her account of a passage describing him driving off in a coach with Richard Carstone. There is also Mr. Krook, the gnarled old man, covered with white hairs like hoar-frost, who goes around with a black cat on his shoulder, and who keeps a law-stationer's near the court of Chancery.

> "And why do you think they call me the Lord Chancellor, and my shop Chancery?"
> "I don't know, I am sure!" said Richard rather carelessly.
> "You see," said the old man, stopping and turning round, "they - Hi! Here's lovely hair! I have got three sacks of ladies' hair below, but none so beautiful and fine as this. What colour, and what texture!"
> "That'll do, my good friend!" said Richard, strongly disapproving of his having drawn one of Ada's tresses through his yellow hand. "You can admire as the rest of us do, without taking that liberty."
> The old man darted at him a sudden look, which even called my attention from Ada, who startled and blushing, was so remarkably beautiful that she seemed to fix the wandering attention of the little old lady herself. But Ada interposed, and laughingly said she could only feel proud of such genuine admiration, Mr. Krook shrunk into his former self as suddenly as he had leaped out of it. (BH 5, 60)

Mr. Krook is a positively medieval incarnation of Death. More specifically "his having drawn one of Ada's tresses through his yellow hand" is a scene from the Dance of Death - in this case, 'Death and the Maiden'. He is also Death in seeing Ada's hair not as a part of her, but as merchandise, or as something that

can be packed away in a bag.

To return to *Great Expectations*: when Pip says, "And he looked down at his leg" part of our discomfort stems from the practical nature of that glance. It is obscene to look at your leg like that. He is seeing it as if detached from himself, as a practical problem to be overcome. Later Pip sees him filing at his leg and describes how he handles it "as roughly as if it had no more feeling in it than the file". (GE 3, 30)

7.

The passage from *Bleak House* is interesting because Dickens is quite overtly transporting us into the world of fairy-tale. Mr. Krook, with his black cat, is obviously a wizard. The bags of ladies' hair that he keeps in the cellar remind us of the use of hair in magic, to gain power over its owner. The whole encounter symbolizes the seemingly magical power of Chancery to fascinate, and to drag youth and beauty into its charmed circle. Mr. Krook's drawing his hand through Ada's tresses is the grotesque travesty of a seduction scene. Ironically it is through Richard, who here protests, that Ada is drawn into Chancery's power.

Walther Killy, in *Wirklichkeit und Kunstcharakter* (WK), discusses *Great Expectations* as a fusion of fairy-tale and realism. And Pip, with his 'expectations', is fairly obviously cut out to be the hero of a fairy-tale of the 'miraculous success-story' genre - except that in his case the fairy-story turns sour. But even if we turn to the early scene we have been discussing, we find that fairy-tale elements already play a part in it. They are not as obvious as in the *Bleak House* extract - Dickens has come a long way since then. He is now a subtler artist than he was when he wrote the scene with Krook. He has a greater power of

drawing astonishment from apparently simple, down-to-earth events.

> "Blacksmith, eh?" said he. And he looked down at his leg.
> After darkly looking at his leg and at me several times, he came closer to my tombstone ... (GE 1, 17)

Pip is in a position to help Magwitch - because of the astonishing coincidence that he happens to be the blacksmith's boy. He is in the position of Parcival, or the prince in Sleeping Beauty, or the significantly-named Monsieur Latour of the dragon-guarded tower and princess. He is the little boy, 'der reine Tor', who has been mysteriously endowed from the beginning with the power of freeing a particular captive from enchantment. Alas! The person he is destined to free is not a wounded king or a beautiful princess, but the ogre himself - who remains a terrible giant, in spite of the fact that he later showers Pip with the nigh-magical gift of wealth.

So Pip, by destiny as well as by convenience, becomes the convict's accomplice, an inhabitant of *his* magically compelling world. Everything that Pip does in the 'normal' world later seems at least half unreal to him, an acted role that may be revealed as no more than such at any moment.

Magwitch's dark glances, the connections he is forming in his mind between Pip and his leg, are felt by the boy as a contamination. He is drawn into Magwitch's world, that is shaded by a kind of death. The worst of it is that he is involved because he is the blacksmith's boy - and the blacksmith's forge is one of the pillars of security in his world. He is not being contaminated alone; Joe, on whom he relies for a sense of belonging, and of connection with his social world, is being contaminated too. (The irony of it all is that Joe is indeed 'contaminated' in the sense of belonging with Pip and Magwitch against the rest. By being able to feel pity for Magwitch, he marks himself off from the rest of the village, and to a certain extent becomes another accomplice, as if he had taken part in Pip's 'crime'. This turns out to be a relief to Pip, though he hadn't been sure, before Joe's commitment of himself, of how he would feel about it.) Joe's file becomes a symbol for Pip of being "on secret terms of conspiracy with convicts" (GE 10,77) and, after it makes a reappearance in his life, he has nightmares of it 'coming at'

him in his sleep.

For the moment, however, Magwitch's ironed leg makes Pip obsessively conscious of his own legs. When he runs off after watching the convict climb over the wall - "When I saw him turning, I set my face towards home, and made the best use of my legs" - the form of words is significant. Pip is running not only to escape from the convict, but also to reassure himself that, unlike the convict, he still has the use of *his* legs. A little later, as part of his complicity with the convict's demands, he manages to smuggle a piece of bread down his trouser-leg, and Pip the narrator says:

> Conscience is a dreadful thing when it accuses man or boy; but when, in the case of a boy, that secret burden co-operates with another secret burden down the leg of his trousers, it is (as I can testify) a great burden. (GE 2, 23)

Pip is now sharing the convict's leg-iron. And later, when he robs the pantry, he believes that he is winked at by a hare "hanging up by the heels". (GE 2, 25) The way this reproduces the symbolism of the world of crime and guilt and punishment needs no explanation.

8.

Everybody knows that Dickens frequently gave human life to objects, and occasionally described human beings in terms that reduced them, or their attributes, to things. Dorothy van Ghent, in a very suggestive essay, describes these techniques in terms of 'demonical possession'.

> The course of things demonically possessed is to imitate the human, while the course of human possession is to imitate the inhuman. This transposition of attributes, producing a world like that of ballet, is the principle of relationship between things and people in the novels of Dickens. (DvanG 213)

In a writer fascinated by these transitions, an interest in puppets will be quite natural, and it will be of use to us to see what he has to say about them.

In *The Old Curiosity Shop* Dickens describes Punch, as he appears to Little Nell and her grandfather.

> They were two men who were seated in easy attitudes upon the grass, and so busily engaged as to be at first unconscious of intruders. It was not difficult to divine that they were of a class of itinerant showmen - exhibitors of the freaks of Punch - for perched cross-legged upon a tombstone behind them was a figure of that hero himself, his nose and chin as hooked and his face as beaming as usual. Perhaps his imperturbable character was never more strikingly developed, for he preserved his usual equable smile notwithstanding that his body was dangling in a most uncomfortable position, all loose and limp and shapeless, while his long peaked cap, unequally balanced against his exceedingly slight legs, threatened every instant to bring him toppling down. (OCS 16, 123-4)

Punch is 'sitting' on a tombstone[1], and this tombstone has the effect of emphasising the deadness of his lower half[2]. This deadness in turn offsets the imperturbable jauntiness of his face. In this description Dickens goes out of his way to emphasize each of these factors, both of which will come into play when Punch goes into action. Punch in performance is a compound of vivid life and personality on the one hand; and the deadness and inexpressiveness of a mere object on the other. The upper half of his body swaggers and struts; and its defiant life is made doubly demonic by the fact that it is attached to dead legs -

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1. Sitting on a tombstone, he reminds one of Pip in the scene with Magwitch. Moreover, Pip stresses that he was put down on a *high* tombstone, which implies that his legs were dangling uselessly - like Punch's in this tableau.
This might seem an irrelevant observation, as I go on to compare Punch with Magwitch, not with Pip. But throughout this scene a partial analogy is drawn between Magwitch and Pip. Pip reflects Magwitch to a certain extent, though with distortions. In addition to seeing the scene dramatically, as an interchange between two personalities, it is informative to see it as a single picture, containing variations and permutations of an imagery also related as a totality. When we do this, it is surprising how the passage from *The Old Curiosity Shop* reproduces the suggestions of the scene from *Great Expectations*, in much the same way as the poem by Ted Hughes, which I quoted in the footnote to p.V.18 & 19) does this.

2. We might ask whether the thing-passivity of Punch's dangling lower limbs, in much the same way as Magwitch's limp, suggest the fear of castration to the beholder. On the other hand, one could hardly think of a more phallic figure than Punch, with his long nose and swaggering club. It is interesting to speculate whether the unconscious appeal of Punch may not rest on his being a single compound symbol for a castration phobia, comprising both the fear and the defiance of the fear.

legs that hang helplessly in accord with gravity and their accidental disposition over the ledge of the booth. A puppet is an object that is half dead, half alive, so that its aliveness has a doubly astonishing quality. Punch's movements, moreover, have a jerky and almost mechanical quality, which blends peculiarly with the illusion of his humanity, to produce a disturbingly comical energy.

It follows that when I said Magwitch's ironed leg and his limp represent a partial dehumanization, I was omitting a complementary side-effect of this. In one sense, the reduction of his leg to an object renders the rest of him the more terribly alive. His lameness jerks his body into extra activity. Nor is this a purely external consequence. It is when we lose the use of some part of it that our body thrusts itself on our notice.

It follows that by showing a man moving, as it were, on the margin of existence, Dickens intensifies our sense of his vitality, his aliveness. We might multiply the instances. Halfway to death, Magwitch is fighting the harder to stay alive. He is a convict but he has escaped. True, the shadow of his bondage still lingers about him - but there is another aspect to him: an intensified drive towards freedom.

The first description of him - somewhat monstrous already in the style - depicts a monster of a man, or apparition. He (or it) is a monstrous conglomeration of actions and things.

> A fearful man, all in coarse gray, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin. (GE 1, 16)

The remarkable thing about this passage is the way all things and their energies transform themselves into Magwitch. Water and mud and stones and flints and nettles and briars rush at Magwitch as, in the mist and in his sense of guilt, his sense of being a fugitive, everything the next morning will seem to rush

at Pip[1]. He absorbs them and is goaded by them - he is soaked and smothered and lamed and cut and stung and torn by them, and the evidence of his struggle seems to be there in the coarse grey of his general colour in Pip's eyes, and of course in the violence of his physical presence: "who limped, and shivered, and glared and growled". Most interesting is the way Magwitch's very sickness is, for Pip, the most powerful instance of terrifying surplus vitality. The chattering of his teeth in his head, this involuntary, violent shuddering, is at the centre of what Pip wants to show us as what Pip fears and later detests in his association with Magwitch. Here is an energy that is hardly human, the energy of a man driven back to his ultimate self by want and exposure. And here, already, we have some sense of contamination, for it is Pip's jawbone that is grasped by the convict with the chattering teeth.

9.

It is particularly fitting that Dickens should from the start have centred Pip's fear of Magwitch in the latter's chattering teeth. No doubt, after Magwitch's threats soon afterwards, the chattering teeth would come to have cannibalistic associations for Pip. And the role played by violent, greedy, aggressive, and sometimes even sadistic eating is a characteristic of this book, particularly of the first part.

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1. "The mist was heavier yet when I got out upon the marshes, so that instead of my running at everything, everything seemed to run at me. This was very disagreeable to a guilty mind. The gates and dykes and banks came bursting at me through the mist, as if they cried as plainly as could be, 'A boy with Somebody-else's pork pie! Stop him!'" (GE 3, 26)

Pip first watches Magwitch eating with earnest childish curiosity and wonder, not untinged by pity.

> I had often watched a large dog of ours eating his food; and I now noticed a decided similarity between the dog's way of eating and the man's. The man took strong, sharp, sudden bites, just like the dog. He swallowed, or rather snapped up, every mouthful too soon and too fast; and he looked sideways here and there while he ate, as if he thought there was danger in every direction of sombody's coming to take the pie away. He was altogether too unsettled in his mind over it, to appreciate it comfortably, I thought, or to have anybody to dine with him,without making a chop with his jaws at the visitor. In all of which particulars he was very like the dog.
>
> "I am afraid you won't leave any of it for him," said I timidly; after a silence, during which I had hesitated as to the politeness of making the remark. "There's no more to be got where that came from". It was the certainty of this fact that impelled me to offer the hint. (GE 3, 28-9)

When reawakened on Magwitch's return, the memory becomes a painful and humiliating one. But here Pip is, for the meanwhile, fairly untouched - except that his delicacy is stimulated by Magwitch's coarseness, and by his own dismay at Magwitch's apparent neglect of his companion's needs - his dismay, that is, at his ruthless, gobbling bad manners. Yet this is a dismay that is felt sympathetically. And when Pip compares Magwitch to a dog, it is in a disinterested, not-specially-derogatory, rather a purely descriptive way.

Nevertheless, this is only the first of a chain of comparisons with dogs, big dogs. The descriptions evoke the melancholy, sly, aggressive nature of these creatures, into whose character the servitude of their situation has entered, to mingle with their wildness. In the self-involved pleasure of their eating, which reflects these qualities, they are less than human yet all too human. And a dog is what Magwitch has become. When Pip sees him in later life, the comparison has been transmuted - the dog has grown old - but the core is still the same.

> He ate in a ravenous way that was very disagreeable, and all his actions were uncouth, noisy, and greedy. Some of his teeth had failed him since I saw him eat on the marshes, and as he turned his head sideways to bring his strongest fangs to bear upon it, he looked terribly like a hungry old dog. (GE 40, 284)

Magwitch's eating-habits are linked with his savagery, and so with the theme of violence that runs through the novel. I have talked of Pip's sense of complicity with Magwitch, which he feels as a kind of contamination, as if he were

becoming *like* Magwitch. This is evident when he hobbles around with a piece of bread down his trouser-leg. In the same scene, Joe accuses him of 'bolting', which again links him with the convict.

The wonder and consternation with which Joe stopped on the threshold of his bite and stared at me were too evident to escape my sister's observation.

.....

"You know, Pip," said Joe solemnly, with his last bite in his cheek, and speaking in a confidential voice, as if we two were quite alone, "you and me is always friends, and I'd be the last to tell upon you, any time. But such a" - he moved his chair and looked about the floor between us, and then again at me - "such a most oncommon bolt as that!"

"Been bolting his food, has he?" cried my sister.

"You know, old chap," said Joe, looking at me, and not at Mrs Joe, with his bite still in his cheek, "I Bolted, myself, when I was your age - frequent - and as a boy I've been among a many Bolters; but I never seen your Bolting equal yet, Pip, and it's a mercy you an't Bolted dead." (GE 2, 22)

Joe's concern with Pip's eating manners places him in the same category as Herbert Pocket. The difference in sophistication, refinement, or even usefulness of their respective tutorship is irrelevant. By the nature of their concern they demonstrate the fact that they are gentle people.

As opposed to Joe's, Mrs. Joe's response to the situation is an aggressive one, consisting in the administration of that violent fluid, tar-water. In fact, the aggressiveness of her relationship with food had already been shown in her manner of cutting and distributing the slices of bread.

My sister had a trenchant way of cutting our bread-and-butter for us, that never varied. First, with her left hand, she jammed the loaf hard and fast against her bib - where it sometimes got a pin into it, and sometimes a needle, which we afterwards got into our mouths. Then, she took some butter (not too much) on a knife and spread it on the loaf, in an apothecary kind of way, as if she were making a plaister - using both sides of the knife with a slapping dexterity, and trimming and moulding the butter off round the crust. Then, she gave the knife a final smart wipe on the edge of the plaister, and then sawed a very thick round off the loaf; which she finally, before separating from the loaf, hewed into two halves, of which Joe got one; and I the other. (GE 2, 21)

In Mrs. Joe, efficiency is a weapon, part of her armour, a proof of her strong-mindedness, of what Joe expresses by calling her a 'master mind'. As family guardian of the horn of plenty, she is able to make it impossible for either Pip or Joe to ask for more than she is prepared to give, according to her

principles - and according to her principles it will always be just less than would be quite comfortable. Her social function as the woman who has brought Pip up 'by hand' is of the same kind. Quite apart from the associations with Tickler that the phrase has for Pip, the smartness of the phrase is part of a self-congratulating spirit, a knowingness about the forms of the world that implies violent domination, latent if not actual.

The same spirit expresses itself in the rituals of the Christmas dinner. Here is the arrival of Pumblechook:

> "Mrs. Joe," said Uncle Pumblechook: a large hard-breathing, middle-aged, slow man, with a mouth like a fish, dull staring eyes, and sandy hair standing upright on his head, so that he looked as if he had just been all but choked, and had that moment come to; "I have brought you, as the compliments of the season - I have brought you, Mum, a bottle of sherry wine - and I have brought you, Mum, a bottle of port wine."
>
> Every Christmas Day he presented himself, as a profound novelty, with exactly the same words, and carrying the two bottles like dumb-bells. Every Christmas Day, Mrs. Joe replied, as she now replied, "Oh, Un-cle Pum-ble-chook! This is kind!" Every Christmas Day, he retorted, as he now retorted, "It's no more than your merits. And now are you all bobbish, and how's Sixpennorth of halfpence?" meaning me. (GE 4, 32-3)

In this display of their knowledge of the forms of society, Pumblechook and Mrs. Joe form a mutual-admiration society. (But Mrs. Joe's place - and her access to the wine-bottles - is later usurped by the sergeant, whom Pumblechook turns to as the new centre of attention, with much the same kind of ritual display.) One characteristic of this sort of alliance is that its deeper pleasurableness relies on the exclusion of the less adept - so Pumblechook's grand entry leads directly to the patronage of Pip.

Mrs. Joe's giving of the Christmas dinner is, like her claim to have brought up Pip by hand, an opportunity for self-congratulation, and this makes it an opportunity for domination - in short moral bullying. Pip, who has a bad conscience anyway, having robbed the pantry, begins to feel like "an unfortunate little bull in a Spanish arena, [he gets] so smartingly touched up by these moral goads". (GE 4, 33) Soon we have this:

"Besides," said Mr. Pumblechook, turning sharp on me, "think what you've got to be grateful for. If you'd been born a Squeaker - "

"He *was*, if ever a child was," said my sister most emphatically.

Joe gave me some more gravy.

"Well, but I mean a four-footed Squeaker," said Mr. Pumblechook. "If you had been born such, would you have been here now. Not you -"

"Unless in that form," said Mr. Wopsle, nodding towards the dish.

"But I don't mean in that form, sir," returned Mr. Pumblechook, who had an objection to being interrupted; "I mean, enjoying himself with his elders and betters, and improving himself with their conversation, and rolling in the lap of luxury. Would he have been doing that? No, he wouldn't. And what would have been your destination?" turning on me again. "You would have been disposed of for so many shillings, according to the market price of the article, and Dunstable the butcher would have come up to you as you lay in your straw, and he would have whipped you under his left arm, and with his right he would have tucked up his frock to get a penknife from out of his waistcoat-pocket, and he would have shed your blood and had your life. No bringing up by hand then. Not a bit of it. (GE 4, 35)

As a piece of bullying via the imagination this is really much worse than (though remarkably similar to) Magwitch's speech:

"You bring me, tomorrow morning early, that file and them wittles. You bring the lot to me, at that old Battery over yonder. You do it and you never dare to say a word or dare to make a sign concerning your having seen such a person as me, or any person sumever, and you shall be let to live. You fail, or you go from my words in any partickler, no matter how small it is, and your heart and your liver shall be tore out, roasted and ate. Now, I ain't alone, as you may think I am. There's a young man hid with me, in comparison with which young man I am a Angel. That young man hears the words I speak. That young man has a secret way pecooliar to himself, of getting at a boy, and at his heart, and at his liver. It is in wain for a boy to attempt to hide himself from that young man. A boy may lock his door, may be warm in bed, may tuck himself up, may draw the clothes over his head, may think himself comfortable and safe, but that young man will softly creep and creep his way to him and tear him open. I am a-keeping that young man from harming of you at the present moment, with great difficulty. I find it wery hard to hold that young man off your inside. Now, what do you say?" (GE 1, 17)

I don't deny the extent of the terror with which so awful a speech must affect Pip, or would affect any small boy in his situation. In anyone less precariously placed than Magwitch such a speech would be unforgivable. Nevertheless the mature reader is able to feel the grim and spine-chilling poetry of it as being also comic poetry: he sees that, unlike Pumblechook's, Magwitch's imagination is not really corrupt. The knowledgeable vigour of his speech derives from a familiarity since childhood with the grim aspects of life, a familiarity that has become half-humourous. Surely it is not unreasonable to say that Magwitch, even while in this situation of needing to terrify the wits out of Pip, is enjoying

the company of a small boy, and is reflecting not only with brutal relish, but also with humourous nostalgia, on the supernatural terrors of his own childhood? Ironically enough, this very speech, cruel for Pip, displays some of the qualities I mentioned earlier as signs of Magwitch's partial rehabilitation as a human being: humour, psychological shrewdness, and a sense of the dramatic gesture - factors that help to create the complex impression that (a long time afterwards) registers itself at last with us as Magwitch's human charm. Don't let me exaggerate - there are aspects of the speech which are hardly a sign of the return of Magwitch's 'civilized' self: we don't know, for instance, how far the poetic relish of some parts of the speech are inspired by actual hunger. But Magwitch has the excuse that he is driven to his rhetoric by practical needs - he really does need to terrify Pip.

Pumblechook has no such excuse. His is a case of imaginative domineering for its own sake. His speech is also a piece of dramatic poetry, if you like, but it is poetry inspired by an epicurean sadism.

Depth psychology and linguistic usage suggest a possible significance in the way that the ritualistic eating of the Christmas dinner is shown to be directed aggressively at Pip. Guilt, the attack of the superego, is believed to be experienced primitively as an oral attack: hence we talk about the gnawing of conscience, etc. During the Christmas dinner, the forces of self-righteousness are having a cannibalistic debauch.

Perhaps it is more to the point to say that the self-congratulatory eating in this scene, during which Pip and Joe are pushed into one corner and the others celebrate their knowledge of 'what's what', of how things are done, goes together with a moral self-congratulation that needs to find a scapegoat. The scapegoat, at first, is Pip, the member of an underprivileged generation. But Dickens's meaning becomes clearer still, as the orgy of self-righteousness, with perfect logic, spills over into the hunting down of the rejected wrong-doer, the escaped convict - a hunt which even the ill-fitted Wopsle recklessly embarks upon.

As I watched them while they all stood clustering about the forge, enjoying themselves so much, I thought what terrible good sauce for a dinner my fugitive friend on the marshes was. They had not enjoyed themselves a quarter so much, before the entertainment was brightened with the excitement he furnished. And now, when they were all in lively anticipation of "the two villains" being taken, and when the bellows seemed to roar for the fugitives, the fire to flare for them, the smoke to hurry away in pursuit of them, Joe to hammer and clink for them, and all the murky shadows on the wall to shake at them in menace as the blaze rose and sank, and the red-hot sparks dropped and died, the pale afternoon outside almost seemed in my pitying young fancy to have turned pale on their account, poor wretches. (GE 5, 40)

Again such grandeur and sublimity! Is the concept of judgement so awesome for us humans that inanimate objects come alive when it is evoked? Joe's forge, like one of the furnaces of hell, prepares their doom. Again the angry red appears against the darkness - "and all the murky shadows on the wall to shake at them in menace as the blaze rose and sank, and the red-hot sparks dropped and died" - the sparks dropping and dying are destined to make their reappearance more than once in the novel.

However, Pip is now seeing the phenomena of the judgement-obsession from the outside, having made what can only be seen as an irrevocable choice as to which side he's on. Let him later reject the memory of Magwitch as fiercely as he can; at this moment, aggravated by the recent treatment of himself, he makes a pact, in the deepest part of his being, with Magwitch and all that Magwitch stands for. He pities the fugitives, and nature outside the forge takes his part, turns pale on their account. With the anxiety of a child who has just fixed a new centre in his moral world, he turns to his previous moral guardians to see that they stand right in his new scheme of things: there is a moment in which he feels (with guilt) that Joe is part of the general betrayal - "Joe [seemed] to hammer and clink for them" - but this anxiety is laid soon after, when Joe says to the prisoners that they were welcome to his pie - "so far as it was ever mine" (thinking of Mrs. Joe). Joe (as usual) has not much to give, but gives to the full extent of his resources.

10.

On the whole, Pip's ability to pity the convict is no help to him in learning to accept him. It is no alleviation - rather an aggravation - of his repulsion. A curious psychological deformation of man comes into play here. Not that there doesn't exist a pity that is clean. But the ability to feel a clean pity is one of the rewards of a rare maturity, a rare possession of self and absence of fear. The narrator of *Great Expectations* (whether we mean by that the older Pip or Dickens himself) has this maturity, so that the reader is permitted to see Magwitch as pathetic while the child Pip sees him as terrifying or ugly.

Pip is horrified by Magwitch because he sees in him the crude greed and violence of naked human need. His later 'civilized' self rejects these even more strongly, though for changed reasons. What is it, then, that the civilized man finds so revolting in greed?

There are two kinds of greed. The first is when the starving man gobbles the food set in front of him. The second is when the man is no longer starving, when he has no longer any direct need to snatch at the food, but when the memory of hunger, or of some related deprivation, compels him to do so. It is not only simple habit that drives him in this case; it is also the persistence of some part of a previous condition in his psyche. He retains the wounds of the past.

The second type of greed is the more disturbing to the onlooker, for while there is no apparent reason for it, his subconscious will supply him with instant intuition of its cause, and set his senses in instant revolt against it. Magwitch's eating habits, even in the later part of the book, mark him as a man who has starved, who has thus been driven to the limits of his humanness. Moreover the starvation that shows is part of the whole syndrome of the hunted man: Magwitch's way of eating, together with other symptoms, makes Pip say of him: "in these ways and a thousand other small nameless instances arising every minute in the day, there was Prisoner, Felon, Bondsman, plain as plain could be" (GE 40, 290) and even: "there was Convict in the very grain of the man" (GE 40, 290).

We have already seen how Dickens shows us the captive/fugitive as a man who is less than his whole self, as someone 'whose legs have been sold to death'. The image of a man traumatized and mutilated arises as a spectre in conjunction with Magwitch's coarse manners. So that pity is also existential fear.

... and as he turned his food in his mouth, and turned his head sideways to bring his strongest fangs to bear upon it, he looked terribly like a hungry old dog. (GE 40, 284)

This is from the later part of the book and here the trauma of decay has superimposed itself on the trauma of slavery, two conditions intuitively detested by all the human instincts. There is a pity in the phrase I have just quoted, but a pity that is obscenely linked to physical revulsion - physical revulsion that has its origin in fear, fear for the personality, fear of what man, and so oneself, may be made to become.

I wish to return now to an earlier and more poignant instance of physical expression in Magwitch. Pip, on his second visit to the convict, has just assured him that he has told no-one of his presence, and Magwitch has lapsed into what he may perhaps consider an expression of faith in Pip, but we recognize as self-pity:

"Well," said he, "I believe you. You'd be but a fierce young hound indeed, if at your time of life you could help to hunt a wretched warmint, hunted as near death and dunghill as this poor wretched warmint is!"

Something clicked in his throat, as if he had works in him like a clock, and was going to strike. And he smeared his ragged rough sleeve over his eyes. (GE 3, 28)

Again what we feel is pity, but again a pity that we recoil from - would rather not be forced to feel. We would rather not hear, rather not record Magwitch's sob, rather not notice the shameful shamelessness of his ineffectual attempt to brush away his tears. But the unfaltering and unimpressible curiosity that inhabits a child as one part of his consciousness sees and records it for us.

The simile "as if he had works in him like a clock, and was going to strike" belongs to the dehumanizing comparisons so frequent in Dickens. The irony is that here Magwitch is shown precisely at a moment when he is becoming

human in a full sense. I said earlier on that Magwitch's meeting with Pip on the marshes is a momentary re-education for him in what it is to be human. And Magwitch's speech, for all its delusions, shows him taking stock of Pip in a way he hasn't done before (except in his humorous reply to Pip's "Goo-good-night, sir" in Chapter One). He shows gratitude, and even his self-pity is a kind of awakening from a state of brutalization. The significant factor, the thing that makes Dickens show us Magwitch's sob as something between a human emotion and the unloosing of a spring, is that Magwitch has been brought back to the point where he is on the brink. From being beyond the pale of the truly human world - the world of awareness, will, and responsibility - he has been brought back into it, as yet unfit for it. (There is a parallel, perhaps, in Miss Havisham's difficulties at the beginning of her regeneration). The poetic emotion of the moment depends on our sense of it being a turning-point, poised between two possible states of existence. It is equivalent to the moment of *King Lear* when Lear's mind begins to turn. Our fear is the fear "Let me not go mad" - let me not lose my ability to function as a responsible being. It is perhaps the deepest fear of all.

To sum up: Dickens portrays a moment of awakening in the terms of a man breaking down - a sob that sounds like the works of a clock - partly in order to show us the full poignance of Magwitch's position, which could not be felt if we met him only in his brutalized form; but partly also to make us aware of the fear that accompanies and befouls our pity.

11.

I have tried to show that Pip's recoil from Magwitch on his return, a recoil which would be experienced by anyone in his civilization (as the 'touchstone'

figure Herbert shows), is not entirely due to the particular values of that society, but harks back to more basic reactions. Essentially, it is a simple recoil from misfortune in others, a crude and apparently ineradicable trait of human nature. This is not to say, however, that a society - a civilization - will not play its part in giving the emotion a particular acuteness through its own assumptions, or on the other hand perhaps making possible a transcendence or sublimation of the emotion into a more valuable form, say a purer or more intensely comprehended pity. One can easily conceive, for instance, of a societal situation where old age evokes a horror and resentment that drowns all pity - the possibility of such a situation is a recurrent nightmare to Shakespeare's mind[1] - on the other hand a civilization might bring its members to such awareness of the bonds between human beings as to make possible a sense of veneration not only for old age, but for suffering itself.

So now we must ask whether the society that Pip is initiated into serves, by its particular logic, to intensify the natural repulsion caused by Magwitch's coarse manners, manners that betray his history of want, bondage and huntedness. Let us leave aside for the moment the question of crude snobbery, the dominant class's self-protection by a system of mannerisms and signs that must be habitual and that serve as a passport to acceptance in the class. Obviously Magwitch offends against these. But though Pip shows himself to be at the mercy of his kind of snobbery in certain things, particularly in his treatment of Joe, I do not believe that it plays a decisive part in his reactions to Magwitch. Let us leave aside snobbery and class interest, then, and consider the civilization that Pip has entered under the auspices of Herbert Pocket and his father as a civilization in the most positive sense of the word. Is there anything in its idealism and ambition, its vision of what man can become, that intensifies Pip's horror of the convict? Of course there is. It is a civilization concerned above

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1. It is perhaps the chief fear that lurks between the lines in *King Lear*.

all to detach itself from the image of 'unaccommodated man'.[1]

Socially this means that a Magwitch, even an uncriminal Magwitch, cannot be considered as a member of the human community. Psychologically it means that the 'unaccommodated man', man in the energy and violence of his naked need, must not be recognized as part of the personality, must not be referred to, must not be called to mind by any action or evidence.

By the creation of Magwitch - or rather by the simple reminder that Magwitch exists - Dickens alerts us to the inadequacies of a civilization built along these lines. Such a civilization, when it sets out to understand man, leaves out one defining edge of the human spectrum. And the spectrum can only be seen truly when it is seen whole.

The irony of the matter is that Magwitch, who carries the apparently ineradicable taint of the savage life about with him, should end up by revealing himself as the most fully 'human' man in the book. This creature moving on the margins of the human world is ultimately the touchstone-being, the creature with "MAN" tattooed in its armpit. He functions as a pattern for the 'complete man' in much the same way as Bloom does in *Ulysses*.

More of this later. Our perception so far is no more than that Magwitch's life is altogether larger than, for instance, that of the Havisham household; and that this is due not only to his individual personality, but to his unprotected life, his various experience. He has the bigger view of humanity and life, and it is through him that Pip is initiated into this bigger view.

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1. See, for instance, the extract from Mill's *Civilization* given in the footnote to p.V.1

12.

With all that is admirable in Magwitch, there is one quality in particular - one that he retains through most of the novel - which makes him quite intolerable, not only to Pip. This is his crudely self-assertive, resentful violence - again the quality of a half-wild dog. For if there is one thing that is wholly admirable in the civilization we have been considering, it is the habit of gentleness it cultivates, its ambition of casting out all forms of violence and surly resentment. I agree with Garis (RG III, 10) in finding violence one of the chief themes of the book. In fact if there is one theme that can be said to cover all the themes of the book, then it is this: violence in its various forms, under its various guises. Garis's interpretation becomes indefensible, however, when he suggests that Dickens is even subconsciously 'on the side of' violence and the exercise of power. To illustrate this, we can even take an instance where violent hatred is perfectly understandable and, one would say, forgivable: Magwitch's obsession with the harm that Compeyson has done him, and his desire to revenge himself on him. This desire,which, like Miss Havisham's suffering, is shown to be a form of emotional greed, is more powerful in its hold on Magwitch than hunger or the impulse to escape - in the opening chapters of the book it leads directly to his recapture, and in the last part of the book it causes his death. For the reader this vengefulness is not merely alarming, but even despicable, perhaps because of a certain complacency that Magwitch finds in the emotion:

> "I don't expect it to do me any good. I don't want it to do me more good than it does me now," said my convict, with a greedy laugh. "I took him. He knows it. That's enough for me." (GE 5, 42)

As a more subtle form of violence, there is Magwitch's resentment against the society that has condemned him, an emotion which Magwitch himself is ashamed of when it breaks out in its most primitive form:

"I've come to the old country fur to see my gentleman spend his money *like* a gentleman. That'll be *my* pleasure. *My* pleasure 'ull be fur to see him do it. And blast you all!" he wound up, looking round the room and snapping his fingers once with a loud snap, "blast you every one, from the judge in his wig, to the colonist a-stirring up the dust, I'll show a better gentleman than the whole kit on you put together!"

"Stop!" said I, almost in a frenzy of fear and dislike, "I want to speak to you. I want to know what is to be done. I want to know how you are to be kept out of danger, how long are you going to stay, what projects you have."

"Look'ee here, Pip," said he laying his hand on my arm in a suddenly altered and subdued manner; "first of all, look'ee here. I forgot myself half a minute ago. What I said was low; that's what it was; low. Look'ee here, Pip. Look over it. I ain't a-going to be low."

"First," I resumed, half-groaning; "what precautions can be taken against your being recognised and seized?"

"No, dear boy," he said, in the same tone as before, "that don't go first. Lowness goes first. I ain't took so many years to make a gentleman, not without knowing what's due to him. Look'ee here, Pip. I was low; that's what I was; low. Look over it, dear boy!" (GE 40, 285)

A man harbouring such violent resentments as Magwitch does is not a complete man, not a mature man, not a man who has come to terms with himself. The adjectives 'low' or 'common' are by no means inapplicable, seeing that the idea of a gentleman implies a spiritual completedness. But it is not only in the explosion of his passions that Magwitch is being common. His whole plan to make Pip a gentleman is a plan of revenge against the society that has cast him out. In this he is like Miss Havisham, who uses Estella in order to revenge herself on the male sex and uses Pip in order to revenge herself on her relations. Every vulgarity in Magwitch's attitude to Pip in the latter part of the book is merely a superficial instance of his revenge, and of the underlying vulgarity of his resentment.

For there is an unresolved ambiguity in his attitude to the gentleman, and so to Pip. He desires and envies the power of the upper classes even while hating them; and at the back of it all is a final contempt, and a desire to do dirt on everything they stand for. Pip is included in this - when Magwitch curses the judge and the colonial, it is Pip's room he is looking round at. He is proud of Pip and yet somewhere despises him. The destructive confusion of his feelings even contaminates Estella:

"And, dear boy, how good-looking you have growed! There's bright eyes somewheres - eh? Isn't there bright eyes somewheres, wot you love the thoughts on?"
Oh, Estella, Estella!
"They shall be yourn, dear boy, if money can buy 'em. Not that a gentleman like you, so well set up as you, can't win 'em off of his own game; but money shall back you!" (GE 39, 277)

Of course, in terms of his own best values, Magwitch is doing dirt on the bourgeois woman by suggesting she can be bought! - and, at the same time, signalling his willingness to co-operate with these same bourgeois values. It is like his being proud, while hating Compeyson, of having a 'gentleman' on the convict ship, and being bitterly ironical about this pride at the same time.

"He's a gentleman, if you please, this villain. Now, the Hulks has got its gentleman again, through me." (GE 5, 43)

Poor Pip is the beneficiary of all this confused resentment, being the instrument that Magwitch chooses for his peculiar, ambiguous revenge on society. Magwitch uses him ruthlessly to this end - as Miss Havisham does Estella in order to revenge herself on men - violating his identity with the same obsessed thoughtlessness.

I may appear to be stretching the concept of violence to perverse lengths here, but Dickens's own practice gives my doing so legitimacy. We have seen how Dickens links the adults' bullying relish of their Christmas dinner with the impulse that makes them so ready to hunt down the escaped convict: *Great Expectations* is full of such surprising transpositions, revealing hidden samenesses of motive. Perhaps the main lesson which Pip has to learn in the book is that Magwitch's violence and coarseness are in fact less objectionable than the more subtle forms of violence inherent in the structure of the society he is so intent on joining. Ironically, he joins this society in order to escape his coarse origins and the shameful associations of his early life (including the brute violence of the convict), only to find that he has put himself at the very centre of his society's systematic violence. He makes himself a part of the society that hounds the wrongdoer, dehumanizes the outcast, exploits the vulnerable individual, and practises systematic suppression through the attitudes of snobbery.

13.

I wish to return to the theme of violence with a discussion of Mrs. Joe's fate, but first of all there is a piece of remarkable poetic writing that belongs to Pip's childhood encounter with the convict, in fact concludes it, and needs to be dealt with here.

Joe has just expressed his pity for Magwitch, turning to Pip to include him in what he says - "We don't know what you have done, but we wouldn't have you starved to death for it, poor miserable fellow-creatur. - Would us, Pip?" (GE 5, 45-6) - and the convicts are led to the landing-stage.

> The something that I had noticed before, clicked in the man's throat again, and he turned his back. The boat had returned, and his guard were ready, so we followed him to the landing-place made of rough stakes and stones, and saw him put into the boat, which was rowed by a crew of convicts like himself. No one seemed surprised to see him, or interested in seeing him, or glad to see him, or sorry to see him, or spoke a word, except that somebody in the boat growled as if to dogs, "Give way, you!" which was the signal for the dip of the oars. By the light of the torches, we saw the black Hulk lying out a little way from the mud of the shore, like a wicked Noah's ark. Cribbed and barred and moored by massive rusty chains, the prison-ship seemed in my young eyes to be ironed like the prisoners. We saw the boat go alongside, and we saw him taken up the side and disappear. Then, the ends of the torches were flung hissing into the water, and went out, as if it were all over with him. (GE 5, 46)

Pip sees the convict ship with a specially imaginative vision: he sees it as we do at those moments when the world seems to reproduce what was already there in our inner vision or our nightmares. This mysterious sense of a scene experienced in visionary terms is not only produced by the phrase: "the prison-ship seemed in my young eyes to be ironed like the prisoners" but also by the oddly menacing comparison to a "wicked Noah's ark". On the one hand the ark is a toy, and has that indefinable familiarity, sinister or comforting, that haunts a childhood object: on the other it holds the accretions of suggestivity that surround the mythological.

There may be another factor that makes the scene strike us as a specially *imaginative* scene, a scene that corresponds to a place in our mind while taking place outside us. We may have an uneasy sense, just on the threshold of

consciousness, that 'we have been here before'. Analysis of the passage shows that we have reason to feel this. We *have* been in a corresponding place before - and in the same novel.

In Dickens's novel, as in De Quincey's autobiography, certain landscapes seem to recur in the individual's experience, waking and dreaming, and give a sense of familiarity, even of déjà vu, even though they have undergone the strangest metamorphoses. An example of this kind of transformed recurrence is the way the avenue of trees in De Quincey's mail-coach experience becomes an endless, vast gothic aisle in his ensuing dream. An isolated example such as this does not give one any sense of the remarkable. But when one sees how persistent these ghostly recurrences are in an autobiography such as De Quincey's *Opium-Eater*, and how (for all that we can find traces of a universal symbolic significance in them) these 'landscapes' emerge more and more as the private possessions of an individual sensibility - perhaps representing the essence of its individuality - then one is liable to stir uneasily from a sense of fate. For the 'recurrences' of De Quincey's *Opium-Eater* are not part of a merely *literary* strategy or convention; De Quincey actually wants to give a picture of how things come to pass in an imaginative man's life. Through the 'recurrences' he will prove the unity and integrity of the individual mind, and the existence of an imaginative destiny.

Both Dickens and De Quincey - Dickens in depicting Pip's experience, De Quincey in depicting his own - draw various *series* of landscapes. Each member of a series is different - and yet is related to all the others in that all seem to have been hung over a certain basic framework; each seems a new pencil improvisation playing around the same ghostly stencil. This 'ghostly stencil', we soon recognize, is supplied by the mind of the man who experiences the landscape-series, and is one of those 'organizing principles' mentioned by De Quincey in his comparison of the mind to a palimpsest (see p.II.6): "the organizing principles which fuse into harmony, and gather about fixed predetermined centres, whatever

heterogeneous elements life may have accumulated from without ..." (SdeP 511)

In our society it is pre-eminently the artists who, committed to the life of the imagination, keep faith consciously with the 'ghostly stencils' that inhabit their minds. The objects that the painter keeps in his studio, and to which he has a strange fetishistic attachment, are reminders - souvenirs not of countries or events, but of places-in-the-mind that remain imaginatively significant to him. More important, of course, is the artist's continual return *in his art* to the same unsolved hieroglyphs or conglomerations of imagery. Wayne Anderson, in *Gauguin's Paradise Lost* (WA), shows how Gauguin fits into this picture; how he returns again and again to certain basic poses, poses that have a private symbolic significance for him - in fact, a symbolic significance growing and changing from picture to picture, part of a constantly shifting and self-enriching personal myth.

But Dickens and De Quincey suggest how the experience of even the ordinary man may be moulded and unified by the existence of such intensely private 'ghostly stencils' and 'fixed predetermined centres'. It is they which help his private imagination to claim its property in a world abandoned by all coherent public interpretations; they see to it that his soul is reminded, over and over again, of those nodes or 'involutes' in experiences in which it regularly finds unexplained value or an unexplained task; they keep the imaginative self's nose to the grindstone.

We can say of the passage about the prison-ship that Dickens is drawing the last of a series of landscapes on a theme, in the manner of Hitchens's various landscape-series, one painting born from the last. Only he is drawing them *for Pip*, as a series of landscapes animated by *his* 'ghostly stencil', seeing it is the adventure of Pip's consciousness, and not his own, that he is following. The shipping of the convicts brings to an end the series of shore-landscapes (except that all the elements of the configuration recur again later, in metamorphosed form, in a London setting - as we shall see). As such the scene

is a repetition, in some ways an extension, and in some senses a summary, a finalization, of what Pip has learned so far about human justice and about isolation.

Whereas a previous passage, the description of the marshes as Pip watched Magwitch stumble away across them into an angry sunset at the end of Chapter One, was dependent on a technique by which Dickens carried the elements of his earlier description to an extreme of abstraction, a pattern of horizontal lines that signified the edge of the world, this present description differs through the sensuous richness of its musical and pictorial orchestration. For the low leaden lines of marshes and river, broken by the beacon and the gibbet, we have the mud of the shore with its "rough stakes and stones". By the light of the torches we see a "black Hulk" looming out in the water, closer and more tangible than this evil has ever been before. And the visual splendour of the sequence reaches a climax as it vanishes with the dramatic extinction of the torches. Through all this we have been carried along on a rich sequence of rhythmic passages, ending with the exquisitely hopeless falling melodic phrase: "which was the signal for the dip of the oars." The auditory imagery is a sequence of growls, oars splashing in water, hissing of torches, each sound adding its own particular brand of menace, and breaking the silence as the torch flames break the dark.

This sensuous richness goes together with a deepening resonance of significance, the transformation of Pip's stark experience into a more universal sphere. This is effected by the hidden mythological references that permeate the passage. The convicts rowing the convicts over the water are the souls of the damned rowing the souls of the damned across into hell. As in Dante's hell, the guardians of the damned are themselves damned, growling like dogs to dogs. Again, the prison-ship is "a wicked Noah's ark", preserving not the germ of life, but the germ of evil, of man's inhumanity to man, waiting always for the day of its return to wreak its vengeance on the human community that has tried to exile it.

The image of the Noah's ark also adds to the apocalyptic suggestions of the passage. I pointed out earlier how Pip's vision of the shore, with Magwitch moving towards it against a background of black and red angry clouds, suggests not only the edge of the human world, but also, as an intensification of this, the end of the world. So here, with the images of the descent into hell, the incident carries overtones of the Last Judgement, here a reversed resurrection. The ship and all it stands for has come in closer than ever before, and it sends out its emissaries to the human shore. The extinguishing of the world follows with the extinguishing of the torches. "as if it were all over with him" - Magwitch is given no hope of regeneration, he is being carried away into a kind of limbo which cannot even be described in human terms as a life.

As the scene derives a universal symbolism through the literary and mythological echoes it awakens, so, too, it derives a deadening inevitability through the sense of ritual that Dickens makes us feel in it. "We saw the boat go alongside, and we saw him taken up the side and disappear." From the hopeless impersonality of Pip's reporting of certain elements of the scene, we get the sense that this has happened over and over again, in just the same way. It has the same inevitability as a scene in *Darkness at Noon*, when "the two officials of the People's Commissariat of the Interior" awaken Rubashov (by hammering on his door) out of a recurrent dream of his first arrest under the Nazis. "He dreamed, as always, that there was a hammering on his door, and that three men stood outside, waiting to arrest him." (AK,10) What Pip sees in this scene is a recurrent situation, *the* recurrent situation, as it exists in the subconscious of his civilization, of the shipping off of convicts. The prison-ship, "cribbed and barred and moored by massive rusty chains" is imprisonment *an sich*.

Having spoken of the universality Dickens gives the scene, let us turn to how he makes it a part of Pip's particular experience, a part of the texture of his consciousness that he will never be able to shake off. Here we return to the idea of a landscape-*series*. It is this feeling of a sequence, embodying the same theme because containing the same structure or configuration, that gives us such

a sense of a pattern of insights forming in Pip's mind. The 'set-up' of the landscape again contains the same elements. The vulnerability and desolation of the 'low leaden line' of marshes, river and shore, is now given in the shapeless flatness of mud. As opposed to these horizontals there were, in the earlier scene, verticals in the form of the gibbet and the beacon, grotesque suggestions of the tools of man's justice. These are picked up in the present scene by the "stakes", a word suggesting captivity, and blending with the "massive rusty chains" by which the boat itself is 'staked'.

As for the boat itself, it serves as a focusing point of all that is suggested in the earlier scenes by "the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing" - the sea that produces the wild beast of the wind and the wild beast, the convict. Of course, Pip can now look at this wild-beast factory with pity and latent indignation, and a certain measure of wakening understanding. Moreover, the flame-motif, started in the red streaks of the angry sky and reappearing in the flames and flying sparks of Joe's forge, puts in its appearance in this passage, too, in the flames of the torches. A new element of vivid and dangerous menace, only hinted at in the flying sparks of Joe's forge, comes to life in the flinging away of the torches and their hissing on contact with the water, their violent extinction (a motif that is to be repeated later in a city river scene). "Then the ends of the torches were flung hissing into the water, and went out, as if it were all over with him."

The whole passage serves to suggest a finality, and absoluteness: in Magwitch's fate, and in the insult and injury here practised on the sanctity of human life. Emprisonment implies a dehumanization by loneliness, hardship and inhuman treatment. Magwitch is not only being cast out, physically, from the human community, he is being cast out of the wholeness of his own human identity. The click in his throat as he turns his back on Joe and Pip is the last sign he gives of the humanity that he has regained in his short contact with them. Once in the rowing-boat, once embarked, he is no longer a man, he can be treated like a dog. As a human soul it does indeed appear that it is all over with him.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAGWITCH THEME

The Magwitch associations won't let Pip rest

1.

This next chapter deals with the period of Pip's life between Magwitch's departure and his reappearance, in other words with the period of Magwitch's absence. Yet its concern is with the way in which Magwitch's absence is *not* complete, the way in which he continues to be present to Pip's consciousness even though Pip fervently wishes to forget him, to dissociate himself as completely as possible from the world of convicts, or the world of crime and punishment in general. We might speak of a haunting of Pip by Magwitch. Rich and with the best of prospects, waiting to meet Estella's coach, Pip yet has the feeling of being in pawn to a very different world, which pursues him, and clings to him, and undermines his tenure in present reality (perhaps because he sub-consciously feels this 'different' world, the convict world, might at any moment claim him for itself). I quote a passage already quoted on p.IV.2-3 :

> I consumed the whole time in thinking how strange it was that I should be encompassed by all this taint of prison and crime; that in my childhood out on our lonely marshes on a winter evening I should have first encountered it; that it should have reappeared on two occasions, starting out like a stain that was faded but not gone; that it should in this new way pervade my fortune and advancement. While my mind was thus engaged, I thought of the beautiful Estella, proud and refined, coming towards me, and I thought with absolute abhorrence of the contrast between the jail and her. (GE 32, 230)

The old stain starting out unexpectedly is the theme of this chapter, then. But when one gathers together all the instances - of Magwitch, of convict - one finds one has actually made a condensation of Dickens's treatment of a particular theme in this part of the book: the theme of violence and domination. So it is in order that we should be starting with Mrs. Joe (linked to the haunting of Pip by Magwitch because of the leg iron by which she is felled): she is the book's

example of violence and domination as they manifest themselves in the everyday.

Mrs. Joe lives by the sword, and dies by the sword. After goading Joe to a fist-fight with Orlick, this is how she is found:

> We were running too fast to admit of more being said, and we made no stop until we got into our kitchen. It was full of people; the whole village was there, or in the yard; and there was a surgeon, and there was Joe, and there were a group of women, all on the floor in the midst of the kitchen. The unemployed bystanders drew back when they saw me, and so I became aware of my sister - lying without sense or movement on the bare boards where she had been knocked down by a tremendous blow on the back of her head, dealt by some unknown hand when her face was turned towards the fire - destined never to be on the Rampage again, while she was the wife of Joe. (GE 15, 111)

So Pip is dragged back into the world of violence. The nature of the violence seems exposed with deliberate starkness in Dickens's description of the scene. He makes every word count towards the impression of brutality, and towards the impression also of an appalling senselessness. The attack wears a face of blankness, a face without features. "lying without sense or movement on the bare boards" - the "bare boards" emphasize the impression of being brought up against a horrific void of senselessness. That Mrs. Joe is struck from behind not only enforces our sense of her helplessness and her assailant's brutality; in an attack of this nature we look for a particularly intimate relationship between the assailant and the victim. In what follows, we see that such a relationship really does exist between Orlick and Mrs. Joe, but it never comes to the surface in a face-to-face confrontation. Mrs. Joe challenges Orlick through Joe, and Orlick doesn't wait for her to turn and face him before he strikes her down. The forces that attract the two into a fatal exchange with each other *as persons* are secret and unconfessed. The blow is indeed a mode of communication, but it is a sub-human one. It leads up against a blank wall, a paralysis of movement and life.

Mrs. Joe is killed with "her face ... turned towards the fire", a formulation that serves to call up her own violence, especially as we imagine the fire reflected in her reddish face. Now she is "destined never to be on the Rampage again, while she was the wife of Joe."

How do we respond to this last statement? Certainly our main reaction is appalled pity. For Mrs. Joe *is* her rampaging, and to erase that from her personality is to erase everything. Dickens enlists our simple delight in life, in 'characters', on Mrs. Joe's side, to leave us in no doubt how terrible this violation of Mrs. Joe's self is. There is even nostalgia in Pip's words, as he remembers her rampages. And yet - surely - there is an element of relief, too? One can imagine the boy feeling (though only in one small corner of his mind) that at least he will be out of the reach of Tickler now. But I think there is a deeper feeling involved here, a relief that feels general, as though some great tension has relaxed itself - think of Brecht's poem about the strain of anger:

> An meiner Wand hängt ein japanisches Holzwerk
> Maske eines bösen Dämons, bemalt mit Goldlack.
> Mitfühlend sehe ich
> Die geschwollenen Stirnadern, andeutend
> Wie anstrengend es ist, böse zu sein. (BB 153)

(A Japanese wooden mask of an angry demon, painted with gold lacquer, hangs on my wall. With sympathy I see the swollen veins on his forehead, indicating how strenuous it is to be fierce/angry)[1]

Mrs. Joe has been relieved of the eternal strain to which she had been condemned, had condemned herself - the strain of being forever on the rampage.

> Long after these constitutional powers (the Constables and the Bow Street men) had dispersed, my sister lay very ill in bed. Her sight was disturbed, so that she saw objects multiplied, and grasped at visionary teacups and wine-glasses instead of the realities; her hearing was greatly impaired; her memory also; and her speech was unintelligible. (GE 16, 113)

One remembers, from descriptions like that of Mrs. Joe preparing the bread for Pip and Joe, how aggressive her sense of her dexterity had been. To find her now grasping at "visionary teacups" is pitiful. Presumably her sight, her hearing and her memory had once been equally sharp, equally a guarantee to her of power and control over the world around her. Now she has lost all this, in fact she has lost everything aggressive and violent that had once characterized her, including the impulse of revenge.

On her request, Biddy and Pip bring Orlick (who, it transpires later, was the man who attacked her) to her bedside, fully expecting her to denounce him

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1. My translation. The poem hinges on the ambiguity of the word 'böse', an ambiguity which I have tried to indicate by offering alternative translations of the word.

as the criminal.

I confess that I expected to see my sister denounce him, and that I was disappointed by the different result. She manifested the greatest anxiety to be on good terms with him, was evidently much pleased by his being at length produced, and motioned that she would have him given something to drink. She watched his countenance as if she were particularly wishful to be assured that he took kindly to his reception, she showed every possible desire to conciliate him, and there was an air of humble propitiation in all she did, such as I have seen pervade the bearing of a child towards a hard master. After that day, a day rarely passed without her drawing the hammer on her slate, and without Orlick's slouching in and standing doggedly before her, as if he knew no more than I did what to make of it. (GE 16, 115)

Perhaps Mrs. Joe's "humble propitiation" is due not simply to fear, but to a perverse sense that she has met her master. Mrs. Joe's world is a world of what Joe calls 'master minds'. The qualifications required are ruthless and aggressive efficiency - a kind of pervading violence - a self-assertion which Mrs. Joe shows even in the symbolic function of cutting the bread, of being the woman who dishes out the food. In a world the values of which are self-assertion, aggression, and inner ruthlessness, the paranoiac, the madman, is king - this is what Dickens wishes to show. It is perfectly logical that Mrs. Joe should treat Orlick like royalty, according to her means.

But now we must face a strange suggestion on Dickens's part - one that would be sinister were it not for Dickens's deep religious feeling for the value of life's mechanisms, however baffling and ambiguous they are to us. What I mean is that behind the ugly psychological motivation, the crudely visible logic of Mrs. Joe's condition, we are aware in a shadowy way, not entirely accessible to the reason, of her very weakness being in its way a state of grace.

In discussing the workings of a certain kind of 'parable', W.H. Auden says of Falstaff:

He lives shamelessly on credit, but none of his creditors seems to be in serious trouble as a result. The Hostess may swear that if he does not pay his bill, she will have to pawn her plate and tapestries, but this is shown to be the kind of exaggeration habitual to landladies, for in the next scene they are still there. What, overtly, is dishonesty, becomes, parabolically, a sign for a lack of pride, humility which acknowledges its unimportance and dependence on others.

Then he rejoices in his reputation as a fornicator with whom no woman is safe alone, but the Falstaff on stage is too old to fornicate, and it is

impossible to imagine him younger. All we see him do is defend a whore against a bully, set her on his knee and make her cry out of affection and pity. What in the real world is promiscuous lust, the treatment of other persons as objects of sexual greed, becomes in the comic world of play a symbol for the charity that loves all neighbours without distinction.[1]

In some similar way, we recognize the "tremulous uncertainty" of the action of Mrs. Joe's limbs (GE 16, 114), together with the anxious childlikeness of her attitude to Orlick, as being *also* a form of humility; we see her admiration of Orlick (the admiration of the bully for a bigger bully) as being *also* a form of self-forgetful love; we are made to feel her complete physical and mental collapse as being *also* the achievement of patience, of peace.

And in Dickens's case we cannot say that this is due (as in Falstaff's case) to our being caught up in a "comic world of play". The novel is always a little too literal and real for that, whatever humourous and playful elements it contains. It is rather that Dickens makes us see - yes, that these things are also true: that Mrs. Joe's collapse may be a true release, if chiefly from herself; that the utter isolation and weakness of sickness may have something in common with the supreme spiritual achievements of sanity and health.

It is Dickens the poet - able to set in movement the deepest mysteries of mind-body connections, the interplay, ambiguity, inter-changeability of emotions, the link between conscious and unconscious, together with the moral nature of both - who can touch us with the sense of this further dimension to the wreck that is Mrs. Joe. It is a particular poetic power which Dickens also uses in his description of the death of Mrs. Gradgrind - the description singled out for praise by F.R. Leavis in his essay[2] - in which Dickens manages to transform Mrs. Gradgrind from the practical nonentity she has been through much of the book, into someone invested through her death with "the dread solemnity of the sages and patriarchs" (HT 25, 197). How does Dickens work in the case of Mrs. Joe?

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1. WHA 4: *The Prince's Dog* , 203. This passage gives such significant aid in understanding Dickens that we shall be returning to it. (See p. VIII.5)

2. First printed as *Hard Times: An Analytical Note* in GT. Reprinted in a revised form as *'Hard Times': The World of Bentham* in FRL & QDL. The particular discussion mentioned here is on pp.207-208 of the latter.

I have said that the world in which all this takes place is not strictly a world of play. Yet the means that Dickens uses are in a sense comic means. "Her sight was disturbed so that she saw objects multiplied, and grasped at visionary teacups and wine-glasses instead of the realities ..." As so often, Dickens's verbal comedy is profoundly poetic. The derangements of sight resulting from brain damage are given a teasing, mischievous life of their own by the word 'multiplied', followed by the frustrations inherent in the word 'grasped'. And there is a poetic delicacy in the fact that it is visionary *teacups* and *wine-glasses* that Mrs. Joe grasps at, a delicacy that reminds us of her frailty and suggests a gentleness (if not a gentility, even) in it. Perhaps the word 'visionary' is not entirely without its effect. Certainly Mrs. Joe's aphasia gives her a serene authority in her isolation from other mortals. It is as though she is no longer of the living, and has yet remained on earth for a short period, to conclude her business there. (And what business? Her business with Orlick?) We may also find the mystery of her state deepened by the fact that she knows it is Orlick who has attacked her, though she cannot have seen him.

I don't pretend to understand it all. If I've dwelt to an apparently absurd extent on the touch of saintliness that hovers around Mrs. Joe in her mental collapse - a kind of hastened ageing process - it is because we are reminded of just this later in the novel, when we watch Magwitch ageing. For the rest: while it would be sheer brutality to say that Orlick has 'tamed' her (in the manner of Jaggers taming Estella's mother) or that he has 'knocked some sense into her', it remains a disturbing irony that his act of violence in a sense liberates her.

Another disturbing aspect of the incident is the reaction of Biddy and Pip to the suspicion that Orlick is the criminal:

> When my sister found that Biddy was very quick to understand her, this mysterious sign reappeared on the slate. Biddy looked thoughtfully at it, heard my explanation, looked thoughtfully at my sister, looked thoughtfully at Joe (who was always represented on the slate by his initial letter), and ran into the forge, followed by Joe and me.
>
> "Why, of course!" cried Biddy with an exultant face. "Don't you see? It's *him*!"
>
> Orlick, without a doubt! .....
>
> I confess that I expected to see my sister denounce him, and that I was disappointed by the different result. (GE 16, 115)

It might be argued that there is no direct evidence that Biddy, as well as Pip, suspects Orlick of the attack. I believe that this is what Dickens is suggesting, however, when he shows her with such an exulting face, makes her run excitedly into the forge, and has her say with such emphasis, "Don't you see? It's *him*!" Such excitement cannot be credited alone to her having deciphered what it is that Mrs. Joe wants. The gentle Biddy, as well as Pip, is thrilled at the thought that they are about to run the criminal to earth. And the exultation of the two of them involves them in the guilt of the rest of the group, who had been so eager to join the chase when the convicts were hunted down.

As for Pip, he never really examines the nature of his feelings towards Orlick, until in the end he is forced to. It is undoubtedly true that he persecutes him, though from a worldly-wise point of view he is justified enough, and cannot, I think, be condemned for his attitude. Significantly there is an element of class in the antipathy between the two - Joe *owns* the forge, and Pip will inherit; hence he is Orlick's social superior. Significantly, too, Pip says to Biddy at one stage that he will spare no pains to have Orlick driven out of the country, a remark that places him with those who have outlawed Magwitch - and as an indirect result of his actions Orlick, like Magwitch before him, takes up with Compeyson. It is such charges as these that Pip will have to meet and defend himself against when Orlick has him trapped by the lime-kiln in their final confrontation.

2.

The attack on Mrs. Joe stands out in the reader's mind as a profound indication of the nature of brutal and senseless, vengeful violence. It leaves a deep impression on the reader, and there is a special reason why it should leave

a deep impression on Pip:

She had been struck with something blunt and heavy, on the head and spine; after the blows were dealt, something heavy had been thrown down at her with considerable violence, as she lay on her face. And on the ground beside her, when Joe picked her up, was a convict's leg-iron which had been filed asunder. (GE 16, 112)

Pip suspects (rightly) that this is the very leg-iron that Magwitch had worn. So the crime is, for Pip, inevitably connected with Magwitch's world (though Pip makes it clear that he does not suspect Magwitch of actually having done the deed). Moreover, because of the complicity with Magwitch's world Pip feels he has been forced into by helping him to escape, Pip feels irrationally that he himself is somehow involved in the crime:

It was horrible to think that I had provided the weapon, however undesignedly, but I could hardly think otherwise. I suffered unspeakable trouble while I considered and reconsidered whether I should at last dissolve that spell of my childhood, and tell Joe all the story. (GE 16, 113)

He is unable to "dissolve the spell", in this way or in any other.

The leg-iron is particularly charged with the essence of Magwitch. First it has to do with Magwitch's leg, that sinister source of childish insights. Next, the early descriptions of Magwitch suggest a colour that is his colour, a colour linked to a consistency or texture - namely iron-grey. The leg-iron is iron, and it is presumably iron-grey. So when it turns up, it is as though Magwitch himself had put in an appearance.

The same is true of a passage not much earlier in the novel, when Pip is suddenly confronted with a file, symbolically the mate of the filed leg-iron. This is the first of the occasions when his childhood memories "start out like a stain that was faded but not gone" (GE 32, 230). It is the occasion when the stranger gives him two one-pound notes at the Three Jolly Bargemen. This stranger is subtly equipped with all the apparatus of an avenging fate.

His head was all on one side, and one of his eyes was half shut up, as if he were taking aim at something with an invisible gun. (GE 10, 74)

It is not long before the stranger is "taking aim" at Pip in particular. The expression is like the combination of an atrocious permanent wink of complicity and a piece of long-range, invisible, deadly-accurate marksmanship. Later

in the novel, Pip will be thoroughly "brought down" by another figure who produces a file - this time Magwitch himself.

> The strange man, after glancing at Joe, and seeing that his attention was otherwise engaged, nodded to me again when I had taken my seat, and then rubbed his leg - in a very odd way, as it struck me. (GE 10, 74)

Unconsciously, Pip must be remembering the time when Magwitch had looked down at his leg, looked at Pip, and then looked down at his leg again, in a way that the child had felt drew him into an intolerable intimacy of complicity with the convict.

Eventually, the stranger produces his file:

> But he said nothing after offering his Blue Blazes observation, until the glasses of rum-and-water were brought; and then he made his shot, and a most extraordinary shot it was.
>
> It was not a verbal remark, but a proceeding in dumb-show, and was pointedly addressed to me. He stirred his rum-and-water pointedly at me, and he tasted his rum-and-water pointedly at me. And he stirred it and tasted it: not with a spoon that was brought to him, but *with a file*. (GE 10, 76)

The file is obviously Magwitch's own chosen sign to make himself known to Pip - as he uses it himself later on his return. Here, it fits in very well with the imagery of the levelled, invisible gun, being pointed in shape, and being used most pointedly.

Finally, there is the leitmotiv of the two one-pound notes that come into the story in this scene, and which Pip tries to pay back when he sees Magwitch again. They are the only part of Magwitch's gift that Pip recognizes as coming from Magwitch, for they are visibly *dirty* money - "two fat sweltering one-pound notes that seemed to have been on terms of the warmest intimacy with all the cattle markets in the country" (GE 10, 77). Pip, of course, is not allowed to use the money.

> Then my sister sealed them up in a piece of paper, and put them under some dried rose-leaves in an ornamental teapot on the top of a press in the state parlour. There they remained, a nightmare to me, many and many a night and day. (GE 10,77)

Mrs. Joe is following the exact procedure of a magician. She is placing Pip under a spell. As so often, Dickens pretends momentarily that the rules of magic also hold good for the world of his novels.

It is so typical of Dickens to hint at the magical that it might be as well to look into this example and examine the why and wherefore of it. And we find that the 'spell' Mrs. Joe places over Pip can by analysed very precisely in psychological terms. Mrs. Joe places a spell over Pip without knowing what she is doing. Nevertheless, she can be held responsible for his state of paralysing fear. A large part of the burden which the convict experience means for Pip is due to the secrecy he keeps about it, and this secrecy is in turn due to his sense of guilt. Moreover this sense of guilt is irrational: Pip's conscience is over-sensitive as a result of the oppressive upbringing he has received. When he helps the convict, he already feels he is going against everyone who has had authority in his life, and he feels he has committed a terrible crime. Furthermore, Mrs. Joe is the personification of the authoritarian conscience which causes his sense of guilt. So, although Mrs. Joe knows nothing whatever about the convict, her intervention in the matter of the pound notes intensifies Pip's sense of guilt, drives him further into secrecy, and generally adds to his burden. As for Mrs. Joe, she almost leaves us with the impression of having done all this on purpose. All her actions seem designed for domination, creating, in their decisiveness, a sense of the unalterable and a sense of the forbidden. When she cuts bread, she seems to be saying, "This bread is in my power, I incise my decisions on its substance, and you shall not ask for more of it". Having seen her with the bread, we can now see her twisting the paper round the pound notes, and 'sealing' them as much through the decisiveness of her movements as through the material effects of her action. She puts the money in a teapot - unquestionable 'territory' of the woman of the house - and the teapot stays in the stiffest, most dominating room in the house, "the state parlour". We get the feeling of her creating little pockets of her own power round the house, extending the reach of her dominance even into dead things. The teapot now bears a command, a restraint over it - very like a spell. It should be noticed, too, how this instance of domination is backed up by Mrs. Joe's moral respectability - in that she will

have nobody touch the money that has been obtained in fishy circumstances. One must hand it to Mrs. Joe - she draws the greatest possible mileage out of an unexpected and inexplicable event. Dickens is showing the nature of moral bullying. Moreover, he is showing how a generally-applied system of bullying domination often strikes unexpected success when coincidental circumstances - in this case, Pip's guilt about the money - conspire to strengthen it.

The chapter ends with another 'haunting' of Pip:

> I had sadly broken sleep when I got to bed, through thinking of the strange man taking aim at me with his invisible gun, and of the guiltily coarse and common thing it was, to be on secret terms of conspiracy with convicts - a feature in my low career that I had previously forgotten. I was haunted by the file too. A dread possessed me that when I least expected it, the file would reappear. I coaxed myself to sleep by thinking of Miss Havisham's, next Wednesday; and in my sleep I saw the file coming at me out of a door, without seeing who held it, and I screamed myself awake. (GE 10, 77)

Ominously, the man with the half-closed eye appears yet another time in Pip's life, when he rides outside on a stage-coach, together with a group of convicts. The convict doesn't recognize Pip in his new finery, but Pip recognizes him.

> And it is directly behind Pip that he sits, like an avenging fate, so that Pip can feel his breath on the hair of his head. (GE 28)

3.

But more insistent even than these odd burstings out of his past into his present is the constant atmosphere of crime and punishment that Pip has to breathe as a price for his 'expectations' - in connection with the lawyer through whom he receives them, Mr. Jaggers. Jaggers serves a most remarkable structural function in this novel: not as the originator of any action, but as the 'central exchange' through which all action passes. He does not stand for Fate or Fortune; but fate, fortune, or coincidence work through him. The only occasion on which

Jaggers plays an active part is when he decides to rescue Estella and her mother - and this happens a long time before Pip gets to know him. Apart from that his agency is passive and neutral - professionally so. Yet for all the neutrality of his agency, Jaggers does influence and infect the nature of all that is brought about through him.

The analysis that follows later of Mr. Jaggers's nature, the nature of those around him, and the nature of the world he functions in, is at the same time an account of Pip's disappointment, his inability to raise himself above the sordid world of the elementary human struggle, of crime and violence and coarseness, into a world of greater freedom and purity. And indeed Mr. Jaggers's own position as 'central exchange' of the novel is symbolic of the impossibility of this line of escape, for Mr. Jaggers is the link between Magwitch and Estella, between the 'low' world of the criminal and the refined and exalted world of the lady: it is a link which supports our growing recognition that these two worlds are, if not inter-changeable, at least founded on the same principles. Mr. Jaggers's apparent command of both worlds would seem to give him a certain authority to pronounce on society. Admittedly he himself does not lay claim to an overall view, and in fact we know he has limitations deriving from a lack of human sympathy or trust; nevertheless, we cannot deny him an authority that makes his 'put-the-case' speech a valuable report on the nature of his society.

> "Put the case that he lived in an atmosphere of evil, and that all he saw of children was their being generated in great numbers for certain destruction. Put the case that he often saw children solemnly tried at a criminal bar, where they were held up to be seen; put the case that he habitually knew of their being imprisoned, whipped, transported, neglected, cast out, qualified in all ways for the hangman, and growing up to be hanged. Put the case that pretty nigh all the children he saw in his daily business life, he had reason to look upon as so much spawn, to develop into the fish that were to come to his net - to be prosecuted, defended, forsworn, made orphans, bedevilled somehow." (GE 51, 353)

The speech is rightly famous for its "Put the case" framework: this framework is a very bold and daring stroke, unpredictably rich in its possibilities. It is essentially a comic device, characterizing Mr. Jaggers as a man so possessed by his profession that he can never shake off legal caution, even in the most

personal situation: the comedy is the comedy of near-automatism when observed in a human being. And yet Jagger's typical insistence on the right form serves in this case to make us take him seriously; it alerts us to that area of human responsibility where the great lawyer is indeed a serious person.

So much for the formula's main function. Yet as Dickens goes on to use it, the formula is not merely legalistic. In the section I have quoted Mr. Jaggers is not, for the moment, protecting secret information by adding the qualifying phrase; he is talking bitterly and ironically about his general experience of life, and putting this 'case' hypothetically in order to insist on its being fairly examined.

For us it comes to take on the comprehensiveness of a *social* hypothesis, a brief picture of some aspect doing duty for the whole. That is to say: what Jaggers sees *is* society. There are only the fish and the net, and the fish are generated only for the net. This, then, is the first aspect of the 'way of things' that emerges from Jaggers's sketch: society deliberately creating a supply of victims for itself, as though to cater for a psychological-spiritual need. Children (and in this novel children stand always more or less for all the innocent and helpless among the oppressed) - children are made scapegoats in order to be destroyed, and they are destroyed in order to be made scapegoats.

The pattern Jaggers perceives in society - a pattern that has much to do with what might strike one as 'human nature' - reinforces what seems to be Dickens's own view in this novel: that in 'this universal struggle' the human being is endowed with certain impulses that by their apparent universality resemble instinct - that there is an instinct for domination, for example, that takes many forms - and, most important, that these instincts find a magnified expression in the institutions and ideological attitudes of society, so that the latter reveal themselves as refined forms of interpersonal brutality and violence.

4.

Pip's rendering of his initial impressions of London has a similar force to Jaggers's speech. As in Blake's poem *London* a limited but characteristic experience of the city reveals itself as an allegory of the civilization as a whole. This experience, too, is dominated by Mr. Jaggers. For it is when Pip can't any longer bear to wait in Jaggers's room - largely because of the casts of the murderers' faces - that he tries to 'escape' into the city, only to be pursued by images of the same kind of horror and portent.

> When I told the clerk that I would take a turn in the air while I waited, he advised me to go round the corner and I should come into Smithfield. So I came into Smithfield; and the shameful place, being all asmear with filth and fat and blood and foam, seemed to stick to me. So I rubbed it off with all possible speed by turning into a street where I saw the great black dome of St. Paul's bulging at me from behind a grim stone building which a bystander said was Newgate Prison. Following the wall of the jail, I found the roadway covered with straw to deaden the noise of passing vehicles; and from this, and from the quantity of people standing about, smelling strongly of spirits and beer, I inferred that the trials were on.
>
> While I looked about me here, an exceedingly dirty and partially drunk minister of justice asked me if I would like to step in and hear a trial or so: informing me that he could give me a front place for half-a-crown, whence I should command a full view of the Lord Chief Justice in his wig and robes - mentioning that awful personage like waxwork, and presently offering him at the reduced price of eighteen pence. As I declined the proposal on the plea of an appointment, he was so good as to take me into a yard and show me where the gallows was kept, and also where people were publicly whipped, and then he showed me the Debtors' Door, out of which culprits came to be hanged: heightening the interest of that dreadful portal by giving me to understand that "four on 'em" would come out at that door the day after tomorrow at eight in the morning, to be killed in a row. This was horrible, and gave me a sickening idea of London: the more so as the Lord Chief Justice's proprietor wore (from his hat down to his boots and up again to his pocket-handkerchief inclusive) mildewed clothes, which had evidently not belonged to him originally, and which, I took it into my head, he had bought cheap of the executioner. Under these circumstances I thought myself well rid of him for a shilling. (GE 20, 148)

The London of Pip's walk has that blend of concreteness and arcane incomprehensibility that one finds in all the best cubist paintings. It is a place in which you turn corners, follow along walls, come into yards - always tangibly somewhere, and yet only capable of seeing and grasping the part, never the whole - as in a labyrinth. Then there is the suddenness of each new view, and the way the black dome of St. Paul's bulges out at him. Dickens creates a

daylight equivalent of the nightmarishness of Blake's 'London' poem, by making each image a surprise, by seeing the city as a spatial booby-trap.

Trapped in the spatial puzzle of the place are its 'meanings' - thanks to a high degree of selection on Dickens's part, these are all variations on a single theme: the abbatoir and the meat-market, the prison, the courts, the places of execution. Around these places where the concerns of the society are being ritually enacted crowds stand, idly attracted, incapable of analyzing the compulsion that has drawn them there, but witnesses to the fact that here their everyday life is intensified and symbolized, if not given dignity. Straw on the streets spreads the news round that the trials are on.

Fascinating is the half-shamefaced, half-impudent way the city dresses the supposed dignity of its justice in tawdry clothes. Pip's guide offers him the Lord Chief Justice in his wig and robes for half-a-crown, and presently offers him "at the reduced rate of eighteenpence". Everybody is dirty and drunk. The guide gives himself out as a participant and hierophant of mysteries; but the mysteries merely take on a sinister tawdriness themselves from his figure.

Dickens is as if in the position of a Martian trying to understand our earthly eros - and finding it celebrated only in the painted faces of prostitutes, faces designed in each feature to serve some fantasy of love, and yet long abandoned by the cohesion and wholeness of beauty or grace. How is the Martian to understand that the fantasies they serve are the fantasies of the underworld, of decay and dissolution, food of fragmented imaginations capable of feeding only on the tawdry, the brutalized, and the exaggerated - he being unaware of the great participation in an imaginative quest that these figures parody and that has its reality still as an acknowledged secret behind the curtains of a thousand rooms?

But in the world Dickens shows us it is often as if the common and purposive flow of the imagination has been *forgotten* - even by earth's inhabitants: justice may once have been a great co-ordinating vision among men; now its glamour works only as an idle compulsion - this melancholy, too, haunts the kind of poetic world

that Dickens must often move in, forced into a kind of opportunism by the ugliness and shamefulness of modern society.

The shameful tawdriness of the law courts, the degeneration that they have been allowed to slide into (at least in their peripheral manifestations), must be due partly to the projection of some of 'good' society's unconscious shame over them. As for Pip, the shameful tawdriness, 'commonness', and filth of this world of criminality and justice is his special hell. For after his early experiences with convicts and crime he is always expecting this world - which is a rejected world (and looks like it too) - to reach out after him and recontaminate him with the "taint of prison and crime" (GE 32, 230). The description of London hence has its share of imagery suggesting contamination: not least strikingly in the mildewed clothes of the man who acts as Pip's guide.

This figure is a strange yet typically Dickensian creation, reminiscent of a hundred other minor figures that he picks out of the press with unerring instinct - the press of the modern crowd, that is. Perhaps a principle of Cockney wit is involved here. Dickens is very aware of how imaginative the city-dweller is, in his own way. The Cockney who is doomed to playing subsidiary and instrumental roles, to being part of somebody else's game (like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern), compensates for this humiliation by way of daring imaginative strategies; in our case we have the typical Dickensian example of the parasite who believes he owns or runs the show (as though the Lord Chief Justice were his own private waxwork) - even though the body of the host is totally unaware of this particular participant's existence.

This claim to centrality in the legal process is one of the reasons why this guide can appear representative - a living embodiment - of the spirit of the place. Another reason is the clothes that look as if they have been "bought cheap of the executioner". If to wear someone's clothes is (magically speaking) to partake of his essence, Pip's guide is clothed in the essence of a string of murderers; he walks around as a composite embodiment of their souls (which have been fetched fresh from the gallows). And in a more genteel way Jaggers does much the same by keeping the murderers' death-masks on his shelf.

Jaggers's assistant Wemmick advertises a similar claim on the spirit-world of the legally-departed:

I judged him to be a bachelor, from the frayed condition of his linen, and he appeared to have sustained a good many bereavements; for he wore at least four mourning rings, besides a brooch representing a lady and a weeping willow at a tomb with an urn on it. I noticed, too, that several rings and seals hung at his watch-chain, as if he were quite laden with remembrances of departed friends. (GE 21, 153)

Laden with these tokens, Wemmick resembles one of those fetishes of a conquered primitive people who have been invaded by a strange culture: the figure is covered with blandishments to the alien magic in the form of common household objects from the invading culture (objects which take on a surrealist flavour from the incongruity of their new environment). The legal world must impinge on a person like Wemmick with something of the force of an alien culture. Yet he has successfully adapted. He has developed a dual personality to live in, yet has made himself comfortable in that state. As for crime, he walks among the Newgate prisoners like an amateur gardener among his pot-plants, and he is quite at home among the gewgaws that the hanged have left as memorials.

"Pray", said I, as the two odious casts with the twitchy leer upon them caught my sight again, "whose likenesses are those?"

"These?" said Wemmick, getting upon a chair, and blowing the dust off the horrible heads before bringing them down. "These are two celebrated ones. Famous clients of ours that got us a world of credit. This chap (why you must have come down in the night and been peeping into the inkstand, to get this blot upon your eyebrow, you old rascal!) murdered his master, and, considering that he wasn't brought up to evidence, didn't plan it badly."

"Is it like him?" I asked, recoiling from the brute, as Wemmick spat upon his eyebrow and gave it a rub with his sleeve.

"Like him? It's himself, you know. The cast was made in Newgate, directly after he was taken down. You had a particular fancy for me, hadn't you, Old Artful?" said Wemmick. He then explained this affectionate apostrophe, by touching his brooch representing the lady and the weeping willow at the tomb with the urn upon it, and saying, "Had it made for me, express!"

"Is the lady anybody?" said I.

"No," returned Wemmick. "Only his game. (You liked your bit of game, didn't you?) No; deuce a bit of a lady in the case, Mr. Pip, except one - and she wasn't of this slender ladylike sort, and you wouldn't have caught her looking after this urn - unless there was something to drink in it." Wemmick's attention being thus directed to his brooch, he put down the cast, and polished the brooch with his pocket-handkerchief.

"Did that other creature come to the same end?" I asked. "He has the same look."

"You're right," said Wemmick; "it's the genuine look. Much as if one nostril was caught up with a horsehair and a little fish-hook. Yes, he came to the same end; quite the natural end here, I assure you. He forged wills, this blade did, if he didn't also put the supposed testators to sleep too. You were a gentlemanly Cove, though" (Mr. Wemmick was again apostrophising), "and you said you could write Greek. Yah, Bounceable! What a liar you were. I never met such a liar as you!" Before putting his late friend on his shelf again, Wemmick touched the largest of his mourning rings, and said, "Sent out to buy it for me, only the day before." (GE 24, 177-8)

For a brief interlude, Wemmick takes the role of Master of the Ghosts. He takes the casts (or masks) down from their repository, plays with them, brings them to life - and within the freedom of the game we are all the time aware of him being fully in control, holding them at arm's length even while indulging in pawky bursts of familiarity.

Wemmick's movements in this episode have something dance-like in them, in the same way as Joe's manoeuvres with his hat on visiting Pip (pp. V.8 - 12) had some of the formality of slapstick farce: both scenes are reminiscent, as art, of the mime's ability to maintain a continuity between naturalistic observation and quasi-formal pattern, and through this the ability to push mimicry a good distance along the road to patterned dance-movement. The point is that the interplay between Wemmick and the casts is a highly structured one (though the element of stylization is well disguised by Dickens). Moreover, the patterning of the movements: pick up, put down; move towards, move back from; change focus, change object; treat the same, treat differently - is not superficial; it comes because the scene is structured around certain foci. One such focus here is the deadness-aliveness of the casts. Is a mask a thing or a personality? Around this imaginary ambiguity a pattern of behaviour can be built up which dramatizes the various aspects of a problem in an ordered way.

It is this aspect of structure in Wemmick's dealings with the casts that makes the scene comparable to a game or a ritual; I am reminded of a game played - not with death-masks but with skulls - in a book by Saul Bellow. I shall quote the passage - it comes from *Henderson the Rain King* - as it deals with much the same complex of problems as the Dickens one. Unlike the Dickens scene, this one takes place in what is supposed to be darkest Africa.

For the first time, I realized that there was a group of shrouded figures in the centre of the arena - roughly, let's say, where the pitcher's mound would have been. I figured correctly that these were the gods. Around them and over them the king and this gilded woman began to play a game with the two skulls. Whirling them by the long ribbons, each took a short run and threw them high in the air, above the figures of wood which stood under the tarpaulins - the biggest of these idols about as tall as an old upright Steinway piano. The two skulls flew up high, and then the king and the girl each made the catch. It was very neat. All the noise had died, had gone like the wrinkles of a cloth under the hot iron. A perfectly smooth silence followed the first throws, so you could even hear how hollow the catch sounded. Soon even the whiff the skulls made as they were being whirled around came to my unhandicapped ear. The woman threw her skull. The thick purple and blue ribbons made it look like a flower in the air. I swear before God, it appeared just like a gentian. In mid-air it passed the skull coming from the hand of the king. Both came streaming down with the blue satin ribbons following, as though they were a couple of ocean polyps. Soon I understood that this wasn't only a game, but a contest and naturally I rooted for the king. I didn't know but what the penalty for dropping one of those skulls might have been death. (SB 12, 163-4)

Perhaps the fascinating thing is just that there *can* be a parallel between the game that the king Dahfu is expected to play in the mythological never-never land of the Wariri, and the game that Wemmick plays in a lawyer's office in nineteenth-century London. Dahfu's game is a test by which he has to prove his fitness to be king. (I shall be arguing that Wemmick's game has a similar function for him.) It is a game involving a peculiar mixture of disrespect and respect for the statues of the gods, for his ancestor's skulls, and (above all) for death. (Compare the alternate respect and disrespect with which Wemmick treats the casts and, by implication, their originals.) The game demands both indifference and wariness. That is, the presence of death should leave you calm and yet at the same time keep you alert and careful. (Wemmick's danger is of a more spiritual kind than Dahfu's; his alertness must be of a psychological kind, a matter of keeping cool among imaginative terrors, a question of how far he can let his fancy engage itself.) Finally the game should be played not only efficiently, but with grace. (In Wemmick's case, read 'humour' instead.)

Wemmick's performance with the plastercasts is not a test, but an exercise - even though here, too, we are concerned with the player's fitness for his professional role: in Wemmick's case with his capacity to 'take' his job, to withstand the pressures it must place on his imagination and on his humane feelings.

To what extent can he remain a generous and sensitive human being (an art which Jaggers, for one, has long forgotten) - and yet not be overwhelmed by the inhumanity of the daily power struggle, the ugliness of the underworld and of the world that feeds on it, ultimately also the horror of man-made death? By putting on his display for Pip, Wemmick is both demonstrating and practising for himself, by repetition, a flexible control and resourcefulness in the use of his fancy. Without his fancy he would not be truly human: hence he allows it to luxuriate to a certain extent in the world of crime and baseness and violent death. On the other hand he may not allow it to involve itself too far, as then he might be overcome with disgust, and even self-disgust. His approach is to get fairly near the criminal through a kind of whimsical understanding and affection, but then also, in the last resort, to keep his distance. With the casts - of course he can play with them much more freely than with the originals - he practises this balancing-act. And of course, from Dickens's point of view, here is an excellent opportunity to dramatize Wemmick's life-strategies within the freedom of metaphor.

Even if we regarded this passage simply as a piece of black humour, an exercize in grotesquerie, in the macabre, we should still have to take into account the dance of involvement and detachment, of approach and withdrawal. For Wemmick adjusts his 'distance' from the casts by allowing them varying degrees of autonomy and indeed of life - and it is precisely on this power to make the dead come to life or alternatively to degrade the living to the mechanical, manipulable, and unalive that the real force of the macabre depends in such a passage. Wemmick is like the marionetteer who wakes up his lifeless puppets for the performance. Before bringing down the casts he blows the dust off them - putting an end to their existence as mere museum objects, making them new, drawing them back to the fringes of aliveness, the shifting borderline between death and the illusion of life. There is an ambiguity, for instance, in the rhetorical form by which Wemmick apostrophizes and jeers at the casts. This form implies the existence

of a hearer (and one imagines Wemmick holding up the cast so that he can speak to its face), while at the same time he is able to indulge in familiarities and impudences that would not be possible for him (even in his humanly privile ged position as Jaggers's 'second') if the casts were actually alive. Simply by at one moment talking *about* the cast, and at the next moment talking *to* it, he is able to reduce it to an object and bring it back to life almost in one breath. In fact, this is what he is doing the whole time. He elaborates a fantasy of one of the casts coming down in the night to look into the inkstand (he has discovered a blot on the cast's eyebrow) and the cast immediately comes alive, develops a character - Wemmick speaks to it chaffingly; the next moment Wemmick is spitting on the cast's eyebrow and rubbing it with his sleeve - in short, treating it decidedly as an object with no life in it at all. It is a tribute to the vividness of the passage that we are rather alarmed, or dismayed, by this indifference to the cast's dignity; we see the scene through Pip's eyes - and for Pip, because he is still fascinated with horror by the two casts, they *are* a bit too alive for comfort.

The problem is raised with almost metaphysical purity at this point. What *is* a cast?

"Is it like him?" I asked, recoiling from the brute, as Wemmick spat upon his eyebrow and gave it a rub with his sleeve.
"Like him? It's himself, you know."

A cast is a solid, inert piece of matter - thus far, it is dead. But it is also capable, for the human eye, of bearing the imprint of a personality, a spirit - and so it is alive. Moreover, what I have just said would apply just as well to a mere 'likeness': the actual words seem to imply that a cast made directly the criminal is detached from the rope is as good as a cloning.

The most gruesome piece of *de*humanization, on the other hand, is Wemmick's description of 'the hanged look': " 'You're right,' said Wemmick; 'it's the genuine look. Much as if one nostril was caught up with a horse-hair and a little fish-hook.' " When we read something like this, we realize that in this

business of protecting himself with black humour and then, under its protection, proceeding into the realms of the horrible, Wemmick is more adept than we could become in a month of Sundays.

Yet what strikes us about Wemmick is not his coldbloodedness, his use of black humour in order to keep the world of his profession at arm's length. It is more important that through his humour he humanizes the criminal world for us. The criminals are, in a certain very carefully limited sense, his friends. In particular, they partake of that dimension of friendship by which we embroider on our friends out of our romanticism and our awareness of theirs, surrounding them with the potentialities of fantasy which are such an essential part of existential wholeness. We have seen how the criminal's exclusion from society is a dehumanization of him. Wemmick humanizes him by understanding his fantasies. In his evocation of the master-criminals' vanities and snobberies - "You were a gentlemanly Cove, though ... and you said you could write Greek" - he enables us to see the human soul struggling to create the more natural conditions of the 'outside' within its dehumanized world. Compare Magwitch: "He's a gentleman, if you please, this villain. Now, the Hulks has got its gentleman again, through me." (GE 5 43). It is not of primary importance that the fantasies of the criminal underworld or the jail reproduce some of the uglier and absurder aspects of a corrupt society; the important thing is that criminals and jailbirds should have fantasies at all. In Magwitch, Dickens studies how a fantasy - which at first seems radically vitiated by the mores it emulates - grows into a complex purpose so rich that it irradiates his life with a meaningfulness that is quintessentially human. Wemmick, insofar as he is involved with the prison world, and helps keep it before his eyes, is a participant in Pip's nightmare; in another sense, however, one may also say that his own fanciful relationship with crime and criminals is already (by example) helping prepare Pip - and the reader - for seeing the positive aspect of Magwitch when he comes.

6.

Mr. Jaggers, like Wemmick, has his own techniques for keeping the criminal world at arm's length. But his methods have none of Wemmick's wit and sportiveness of fantasy. His own imaginative response to the criminal world is a steady, serious, sombre one, as we have seen in the speech I quoted earlier on. He takes the brunt of the criminal world broadside on. While being something of a genius in the world of crime, and being temperamentally obsessed by it, he knows in every fibre of his being that he is dealing with poison. There can be no question of imaginative flirtation with crime and punishment and death in his case, as there is in Wemmick's. There can be no question of his being 'friends' with his clients. He keeps them at a distance by being the 'principal', and keeping Wemmick to engage in the necessary more personal relations with them. On one occasion he quite ruthlessly and unquestioningly 'uses' Pip in a similar role, shepherding him past a crowd of clients with his hand on his shoulder, tantalizing them as Miss Havisham had tantalized her relations by having Pip walk her round the room.

This need to keep clean of the world of crime he deals in expresses itself neurotically in his hand-washing between cases and after the working day is done.

> I embrace this opportunity of remarking that he washed his clients off, as if he were a surgeon or a dentist. He had a closet in his room, fitted up for the purpose, which smelt of the scented soap like a perfumer's shop. It had an unusually large jack-towel on a roller inside the door, and he would wash his hands,and wipe them and dry them all over this towel, whenever he came in from a police-court or dismissed a client from his room. When I and my friends repaired to him at six o'clock next day, he seemed to have been engaged on a case of a darker complexion than usual, for, we found him with his head butted into this closet, not only washing his hands, but laving his face and gargling his throat. And even when he had done all that, and had gone all round the jack-towel, he took out his penknife and scraped the case out of his nails before he put his coat on. (GE 26, 186)

Maybe this hand-washing is not merely neurotic, but also practical, for we are told that the 'halo of scented soap' that surrounds him helps keep off the clients. It signals to them that he is *above* them, and the image is strangely consonant with the conceptions of class superiority that bedevil the whole book. The scented soap signals that Jaggers is not contaminated by the evil and filth and

suffering and violence he deals in - just as the 'gentleman' Pip would like to be is not contaminated by even the knowledge of anything 'low'.

In spite of Mr. Jaggers's human unpleasantness, countless rereadings of the book have not succeeded in eradicating my conviction that there is something heroic in his existence. Wemmick is far more attractive as a human being, but Jaggers is the heroic figure. Like most heroes, he is something of a monster. With his eyes wide open (and it is part of his heroism that he can keep them so) he embroils himself in a world of highly contaminating evil, and yet maintains his freedom of action, his authority and power of influence in that world. What he achieves by this in human terms seems infinitesimal. We only hear how he has once seen his way clear to saving a single human soul, a child - and how even she was not saved, for Estella has by now been ruined by the foster-parent Jaggers once found for her. Yet this attempt is enough to give Jaggers untouchable dignity, of a certain tragic kind.

However, it is the merely unpleasant side of Jaggers that we have to deal with mostly. In the world of evil that he embroils himself in, he keeps his head above water by developing techniques of domination. These techniques are only sufficient to give him enough freedom to maintain his authority, and a minimal power of action, within that world of evil - they do not free him psychologically from the world of his work, as Wemmick's strategies do him. Unlike Wemmick, Jaggers brings the office home with him. This is evident not only in the 'decorations' of his house, but in the habits of bullying and domination that he can never slough off. He makes everyone aware of their worst motives, makes everyone feel a criminal, and at Pip's first dinner at his house he manages to bring out the worst in all his guests' characters. Moreover his vulpine pursuit of the criminal in man, a professionalism that has something of the superhuman in it, never lets up:

To my surprise, he seemed at once to be principally, if not solely, interested in Drummle.

"Pip," said he, putting his large hand on my shoulder and moving me to the window, "I don't know one from the other. Who's the Spider?"

"The spider?" said I.
"The blotchy, sprawly, sulky fellow."
"That's Bentley Drummle," I replied; "the one with the delicate face is Startop."
Not making the least account of "the one with the delicate face", he returned, "Bentley Drummle is his name, is it? I like the look of that fellow."
He immediately began to talk to Drummle, not at all deterred by his replying in his heavy reticent way, but apparently led on by it to screw discourse out of him. (GE 26, 187)

I suppose we are reminded that the lawyer has a vested interest in crime (Dickens is full of digs of this kind, particularly in connection with undertakers). Jaggers's interest in Drummle is vampirish. He sees in him a fish that will one day swim into his net. Yet we realize that his interest isn't really dictated by *practical* professionalism: rather, the whole of Jaggers's sensibility and imagination is invested in the criminal - no other type of human being interests him. When he says "I like the look of that fellow" he is actually giving expression to a profound aesthetic satisfaction. There is a kind of second sight in his study of Drummle, too. He is seeing Drummle in the dock for some violent crime. What is more, he provokes the future to reveal itself ahead of time. He works the company up into a state which ends in Drummle's being about to hurl a glass at Startop's head - at which moment Jaggers authoritatively breaks the spell, and declares the dinner over.

After the dinner Jaggers breaks out of his ruminations sufficiently to warn Pip against Drummle; but again, clearly, this warning is not what most interests him ...

As the door was not yet shut, I thought I would leave Herbert there for a moment, and run upstairs again to say a word to my guardian. I found him in his dressing-room surrounded by his stocks of boots, already hard at it, washing his hands of us.
I told him I had come up again, to say how sorry I was that anything disagreeable should have occurred, and that I hoped he would not blame me much.
"Pooh!" said he, sluicing his face, and speaking through the water-drops; "it's nothing, Pip. I like that Spider though."
"I am glad you like him, sir," said I; "but I don't."
"No, no," my guardian assented; "don't have too much to do with him. Keep as clear of him as you can. But I like the fellow, Pip; he is one of the true sort. Why, if I was a fortune-teller - "
Looking out of the towel, he caught my eye.
"But I am not a fortune-teller," he said, letting his head drop into a festoon of towel, and towelling away at his two ears. "You know what I am, don't you? Goodnight, Pip." (GE 26, 191)

There is a touch of abstraction, not to say condescension, in Jaggers's warning. Pip, being an ordinary person, must be protected from Drummle. Jaggers, a more extraordinary phenomenon, is doomed or privile ged to immerse himself in the psychology of the criminal: *he* can handle it. Once again, the supernatural is used by Dickens as an image for the abnormal powers developed in a man by a specialized profession: "Why, if I was a fortune-teller - " As usual, Jaggers doesn't state - his lawyer's caution keeps him from that - he suggests, but with immense power. No, he's not a fortune-teller. He's not even going to tell Pip what he is. Pip knows that. And in fact what Pip knows will only suggest to him exactly what kind of a specialized fortune-teller he really is, and exactly what fortune he would foretell for Drummle.

All this with his head speaking through a festoon of towel. The festoon reminds us of the carved garlands on Jaggers's panelled walls, which in turn had reminded Pip of a hangman's loops. So Jaggers is another of the 'hanged' figures in the novel, condemned to his profession as to a mental prison.

The plaster casts in Jaggers's office have a quite different 'life' when working in conjunction with Jaggers to that which they had in Wemmick's presence. They play a part in Jaggers's domination of Pip. Several times when Jaggers is remaining obdurate to anxious questionings on Pip's part, the casts seem to look down on him with bated breath (GE 36, 249-51; GE 40, 289). Only once do they seem to be half on his side. This is just before something is about to rise from Pip's unconscious into his consciousness. He is about to make an important and rather awful discovery concerning Estella's parentage. At this point the casts, in the candlelight, appear to be playing a grotesque game of bo-peep with him (GE 48, 332).

But Jaggers goes further than merely owning plaster casts of murderers' faces that he keeps on the shelf of his office. He also owns a real live murderess, whom he keeps in his house and displays, who is something of an advertisement for him.

"Well," said Wemmick, "he'll give you wine, and good wine. I'll give you punch, and not bad punch. And now I'll tell you something. When you go to dine with Mr. Jaggers, look at his housekeeper."

"Shall I see something very uncommon?"

"Well,"said Wemmick, "you'll see a wild beast tamed. Not so very uncommon, you'll tell me. I reply, that depends on the original wildness of the beast, and the amount of taming. It won't lower your opinion of Mr. Jaggers's powers. Keep your eye on it." (GE 24, 178)

Here is Pip's first description of the housekeeper:

She was a woman of about forty, I supposed - but I may have thought her younger than she was. Rather tall, of a lithe nimble figure, extremely pale, with large faded eyes, and a quantity of streaming hair. I cannot say whether any diseased affection of the heart caused her lips to be parted as if she were panting, and her face to bear a curious expression of suddenness and flutter; but I know that I had been to see "Macbeth" at the theatre, a night or two before, and that her face looked to me as if it were all disturbed by fiery air, like the faces I had seen rise out of the Witches' cauldron.

She set the dish on, touched my guardian quietly on the arm with a finger to notify that dinner was ready, and vanished. (GE 26, 187)

We have already seen how Dickens - in this novel - uses 'streaming hair' to indicate a special helplessness, helplessness before oneself. The housekeeper's "lithe nimble figure" suggests a potential vitality that is then denied by her pallor and her large faded eyes. It is as if the life has been drained from her, and we realize later that this is indeed due to a sense of helplessness before herself, to a fear of the consequences of her impulses. I've also spoken earlier about the way the expression of her face relates to the other 'hanged' faces in the book. This is because Jaggers keeps his power over her by activating in her the memory of her closeness to the gallows. He forces her to live in fear of hanging, so that the moment of hanging is always with her. She lives in that moment.

This makes her wraith-like - at any rate in combination with the rest of the description: her pallor, the streaming hair (connected with the Witches in *Macbeth*), her gliding movements, and her vanishing. Also her panting makes her seem to exist on the border of life and death. Her touching Jaggers on the arm reminds us of Mrs. Joe's propitiation of Orlick (the violent woman surrendering to the mastery of the still stronger) - like Mrs. Joe, the housekeeper is in a state of life-in-death, and Jaggers is her controller. It is a psychological

domination that Mr. Jaggers holds over her, but a psychological domination of a particularly brutal kind. He governs her soul by repeatedly activating two contradictory impulses in her: an impulse of rebellion - and an impulse of fear, totally automatic,that is linked to that impulse of rebellion; the jammed emotions appear to defeat her vitality and to leave her at the same time agonized and passive.

Jaggers consciously governs her soul. And it's not out of place that we should be made to think of a necromancer calling up and then banishing the dead.

Now, the housekeeper was at that time clearing the table; my guardian, taking no heed of her, but with the side of his face turned from her, was leaning back in his chair biting the side of his forefinger and showing an interest in Drummle, that, to me, was quite inexplicable. Suddenly, he clapped his large hand on the housekeeper's like a trap, as she stretched it across the table. So suddenly and smartly did he do this, that we all stopped in our foolish contention.

"If you talk of strength," said Mr. Jaggers, "I'll show you a wrist. Molly, let them see your wrist."

Her entrapped hand was on the table, but she had already put her other hand behind her waist. "Master," she said, in a low voice, with her eyes attentively and entreatingly fixed upon him. "Don't!"

"I'll show you a wrist," repeated Mr. Jaggers, with an immovable determination to show it. "Molly, let them see your wrist."

"Master," she again murmured. "Please!"

"Molly," said Mr. Jaggers, not looking at her, but obstinately looking at the opposite side of the room, "let them see *both* your wrists. Show them. Come!"

He took his hand from hers, and turned that wrist up on the table. She brought her other hand from behind her, and held the two out side by side. The last wrist was much disfigured - deeply scarred and scarred across and across. When she held her hands out, she took her eyes from Mr. Jaggers, and turned them watchfully on every one of the rest of us in succession.

"There's power here," said Mr. Jaggers, coolly tracing out the sinews with his forefinger. "Very few men have the power of wrist that this woman has. It's remarkable what mere force of grip there is in these hands. I have occasion to notice many hands; but I never saw stronger in that respect, man's or woman's, than these."

While he said these words in a leisurely, critical style, she continued to look at every one of us in regular succession as we sat. The moment he ceased, she looked at him again. "That'll do, Molly," said Mr. Jaggers, giving her a slight nod; "you have been admired, and can go." She withdrew her hands and went out of the room, and Mr. Jaggers, putting the decanters on from his dumb-waiter, filled his glass and passed round the wine. (GE 26, 189)

Molly's "Master. Please." strikes us as being not so much a servant's address to her employer, as a spirit's to a necromancer, protesting against being called back to life (as indeed Molly is protesting against being recalled to remembrance of her act of violence).

There cannot be a more cruel instance of domineering in the whole book than Mr. Jaggers's coolly sadistic demonstration of her 'points'. The focal point of his domination is her wrist. Now, the central point of the damage society had done to Magwitch lay in his leg, with the leg-iron on it - a symbol that his freedom of movement had been taken from him. But it is Molly's hand that is trapped by Jaggers, that is disfigured, that condemns her to herself. This is, if anything, a crueller torture, for the hand is the instrument of action, and to place an inhibition upon it is to check each impulse to action with a corresponding impulse of fear. Jaggers has her in mind-forged manacles.

The theme of the domination of man by man is at its most disturbing in this presentation of Jaggers and Molly: Jaggers's relish for the bullying has an epicurean quality which is totally repulsive[1]; on the other hand, his control of Molly, which in one sense allegorizes the law's control of anti-social human passions, permits a plea to be made for domination and subjugation (no matter what ugly human impulses are brought into play) on the grounds of simple necessity. It is typical of Dickens that we should be left with the problem's insolubility.

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1. This dinner in Jaggers's house recalls the Christmas dinner at which Pip is so mercilessly put through the mill - here Pip notices how the baiting of Drummle adds zest to Jaggers's wine.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RECAPITULATION OF THE MAGWITCH THEME

Magwitch's Return

1.

We have reached an area of the novel now, the character of which is recapitulatory: let me at this point myself recapitulate by quoting some earlier remarks on the overall pattern of *Great Expectations:*

> In the first part of the novel, Pip is largely passive. Things happen to him. In particular, he has his confrontations with Magwitch and with Satis House. .....
>
> He cannot communicate these experiences or bring his reason to bear on them. In a special way they become his nightmare. Everything he sees becomes imbued with some meaning that derives from them. Believing that he has expectations that derive from Miss Havisham, he believes that fate has chosen for him to live in the Satis House world. Yet the texture of his life and imagination is in a strange way as much, if not more, made up of the Magwitch world .....
>
> The return of Magwitch, and the discovery that it is from him that he derives his expectations, shatters Pip's interpretation of his world, and in this way makes it possible for him to escape his nightmare by understanding, forgiveness, charity and renunciation. (Pp. IV. 2-3)

Another approach would be to discuss the shape of the novel *Great Expectations* as though it were a piece of music, a late example of the sonata form, a sonata movement not simple, clear of statement, and unambiguous as one might expect from a composer of the classical period, but on the contrary with a psychological finesse that plays with the listener, hides the true structure till it emerges with dramatic effect, trails red-herrings to lead him on the wrong scent, subtly introduces ambiguous phrases with hidden meanings the true significance of which only emerges later - in short, a sonata movement by some hugely robust and tragic joker such as Beethoven.

Dickens's exposition is dominated by two themes. The first of these is stated in the meeting between Pip and Magwitch. This theme is stated in such a way as to be unforgettable. Yet, paradoxically, it is also stated in such a way

as to appear to have come to an end there, with its mere statement. We are given the chance (and every persuasion) to believe that we have done with it, that it won't come again. The second theme is stated with Pip's introduction to Satis House. This theme is strange enough, and goodness knows it gives enough warnings of itself against following it, but it is obvious Pip is going to be drawn into it. The exposition ends with Pip's being decidedly marked down for entry into the world of this second theme, entry into the Estella-Miss Havisham-Satis House world - apparently at the instigation of this world itself, for Pip believes Miss Havisham is his patron.

The development follows as the next stage of the sonata, in which the composer lets his two main themes interweave and plays them off against each other, contrasting them and also showing their affinities with each other. At this stage in *Great Expectations* we are aware of the contrasts without being aware of the affinities. Remember, we see all this through the eyes of Pip, and for Pip there is only one theme, the Satis House theme, the gentlemanly theme. This theme, the second theme, looks decidedly as if it's the main theme. And yet the first theme, the Magwitch theme, keeps making its appearance, popping up out of the music when least expected. What can this theme have to do with the mainstream of Pip's life? He hears it with resentment, rejecting it as irrelevant, a succession of coincidences; he refuses to accept it as a significant part of his life. Yet it's stubbornly there.

The first chords of the recapitulation bring a complete reversal. Magwitch re-enters Pip's life with a confidence that is at first utterly inexplicable, then inescapable. Pip is forced to review the whole significance of his life. He sees that his entire progress up till now has been due to the patronage of Magwitch, has been a result of the meeting that he had relegated to a guilty memory, repressed as far as possible. The main theme has been in truth the first theme, the convict theme, all along. The development section was in fact steered all the way by this first theme. Magwitch - with his ambitions, his resentments, his values - is the

'truth' of Pip's life as a gentleman, not Miss Havisham. Yet note how the attitudes of the convict reflect the social attitudes of the lady! Here is yet another discovery. We can no longer keep the two themes separate as we had thought we could. They have been parallel, interwoven, mutually reflecting, from the start.

So there follows a resolution of all the themes in the novel, as Pip resolves his problems and severs himself from the themes and nightmares that have been riding him by understanding them better. He must understand the link between the two main themes of his life, the link between Magwitch and Estella, and form an attitude that can deal with them both as essential parts of his experience. And so on. This section of the resolution of themes and the liberation from them is a marvellous piece of music, containing many strange and unexpected passages as well as passages of a strict and immensely satisfying logic.

Finally we come to the coda, which is interesting particularly in that Dickens himself was in two minds as to what it should contain. What is left after the music has all resolved itself? What is left of Pip, after he has freed himself of the obsessions that had made up his life? Dickens wrote two endings, gave two answers.

And where are we now? In this chapter I want to discuss the actual moment of Magwitch's return - that sudden short-circuit with the beginning of the book, that seems to sweep aside all that has gone between. The first chords of the recapitulation, then.

2.

Dickens prepares us for the return of Magwitch with a passage that takes us a long way from the actual world of Pip's problems. Its relevance at this

point in the book is that it deals with fate.

In the Eastern story, the heavy slab that was to fall on the bed of state in the flush of conquest was slowly wrought out of the quarry, the tunnel for the rope to hold it in its place was slowly carried through the leagues of rock, the slab was slowly raised and fitted in the roof, the rope was rove to it and slowly taken through the miles of hollow to the great iron ring. All being made ready with much labour, and the hour come, the sultan was aroused in the dead of the night, and the sharpened axe that was to sever the rope from the great iron ring was put into his hand, and he struck with it, and the rope parted and rushed away, and the ceiling fell. So, in my case; all the work, near and afar, that tended to the end, had been accomplished; and in an instant the blow was struck, and the roof of my stronghold dropped upon me. (GE 38, 270)

The passage is weak because the kind of fatedness it evokes is so inadequate and literary, especially when contrasted with the true questions of destiny that are raised by the chapter which follows.

The fairy-tale plot against the sultan that Dickens describes is used as an extended metaphor for the plots that the events of *outside* life seem sometimes to weave against us. A whole series of events (developing by chance, or rather by a determined pattern of cause and effect) happen *just so* and end by preparing, in accumulation, the final disaster. This is fate as the determinist would understand it. There is a fascination to the idea, and there is certainly a thrill to be had at the moment when a cause-and-effect concatenation is suddenly revealed. But the coincidences that result from a mechanically-caused series of events have little interest in a novel, where we know the author has total power to order coincidences as he pleases; from a novel we require an idea of fate that will be a *psychological* revelation.

Nevertheless, Dickens has an interest in the thrill of the mechanical concatenation, the thought that one's life can only turn out one way, and that that way might be already determined. He uses Miss Wade to express the idea in *Little Dorrit*:

"In our course through life we shall meet the people who are coming to meet *us*, from many strange places and by many strange roads," was the composed reply; "and what it is set to us to do to them, and what it is set to them to do to us, will all be done." (LD I, 2, 37)

Here the determinism is used to characterize Miss Wade, and suits well with her understanding of life in terms of patterns of automatic domination. However, the

sense of fate evoked in this passage does have a lyrical quality of its own, too, which imparts its flavour to the roads across Europe, the migration of the characters East and West, North and South, the obsessive restlessness that is so important a part of the book. These roads across Europe are roads on which the characters may meet each other or miss each other, according to the chance of things; they too (like the sultan's trap) are a kind of metaphor for fate - that kind of fate, that is, which is hardly more than fortuitousness. Miss Wade's words give what Eliot calls, in the essay on Dickens and Wilkie Collins which I quoted earlier (see p. IV.32), an 'air of spurious fate' to the pattern Dickens has worked into his novel.

This 'air of spurious fate', which in life nearly always accompanies our sense of a coincidence - in a novel we require a bit more prodding before we feel it - was a real and important experience for Dickens. When Forster writes about this aspect of Dickens's universal curiosity, he seems to catch a tone that belongs quintessentially to Dickens himself:

> On the coincidences, resemblances and surprises of life Dickens liked especially to dwell, and few things moved his fancy so pleasantly. The world, he would say, was so much smaller than we thought it; we were all so connected by fate without knowing it; people supposed to be far apart were so constantly elbowing each other; and tomorrow bore so close a resemblance to nothing half so much as to yesterday. (JF I, 1, v, 59)

The imagery here - "so constantly elbowing each other" - suggests the great city, and in fact it is to the city that such an experience of coincidence belongs. In the village, where everybody is known to everybody, their fates may be assumed to be bound up with one another anyway. But in the city it is the meaningless automatism of blind chance that presents the lonely individual, from time to time, with a face or an idea or a sensation that happens to be meaningful to him, that will cause a convulsion of the imagination in him, that will change his life.

The city is an ant-heap, or a whorling millpool of floating human debris, people bizarrely colliding, or as bizarrely passing each other by, narrowly, with no awareness of each other. And with this vision we are back with London as De Quincey sees it, the London of the search for Ann:

> If she lived, doubtless we must have been sometimes in search of each other, at the same moment, through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps even within a few feet of each other - a barrier no wider, in a London street, often amounting in the end to a separation for eternity! (1822 O-E 381)

London seems to figure almost as a symbol for a new sense of fate: the sense of fate that men form in reaction to their awareness of how dependent their emotional life is on encounters manipulated by chance. There seems a rightness, because of this symbolism, in Pip's unconsciously awaiting the return of Magwitch into his life while situated high up in the Temple, with London outside his window, a London full of storm and circulating rumours, whose bells he can hear, trying through them to introduce a sense of rational pattern into the city by listening to them striking the hour, but failing, because they strike unsimultaneously and their chimes are distorted by the wind.

One is reminded of the passage in the *Opium-Eater* where De Quincey is on the brink of entering London, and in which we are given a powerful sense of fate, "the mighty vision of London waiting for me afar off" (1856 O-E 228). De Quincey's mind is filled with "horror recoiling from that unfathomed abyss in London into which I was now so wilfully precipitating myself" (1856 O-E 228). He watches a storm grow up outside his window, a storm that echoes his state of mind and prefigures his opium dreams, but is also a representation of the London he is about the enter:

> For nearly two hours I had heard fierce winds arising; and the whole atmosphere had, by this time, become one vast laboratory of hostile movements in all directions. Such a chaos, such a distracting wilderness of dim sights, and of those aweful "sounds that live in darkness" (Wordsworth's "Excursion"), never have I consciously witnessed. (1856 O-E 226)

London is a labyrinth or a laboratory, the whorling millpool of encounters and emptinesses.

It seems likely that Dickens was influenced (whether consciously or unconsciously) by a memory of this scene from the *Opium-Eater* when he was setting the scene for Magwitch's re-entry into Pip's life. It makes sense, at any rate, to draw a parallel between the two scenes: both strongly suggest the existence of

a fate that is about to reveal itself. And reading them we can no longer believe that this fate is merely a spurious fancy.

I suggested earlier that the city-dweller's sense of fate is something he invents to explain the human coincidences arising in the course of the inhuman dice-game played by the city: "In the city it is the meaningless automatism of blind chance that presents the lonely individual, from time to time, with a face or an idea or a sensation that happens to be meaningful to him, that will cause a convulsion of the imagination in him, that will change his life." (P.VII.5) But in fact such strokes of fate are not ultimately dependent on the mechanical weavings of external chance, but on a psychological choice. The imagination chooses its property out of the chaos of the world. It is not that fate arranges the lover's chance meeting with the woman he is to love; it is that he himself, or some obscure purpose within him, chooses that one face from the throng. It is not that fate sends our demons - our 'sandmen' - to us in the guise of the salesmen who work our district; it is that something in us recognizes the demon in the man - and the demon exists, maybe, only for us.

In Magwitch's absence, Pip is always stumbling on the world of crime and punishment - he feels it haunts him; but this is perhaps only because the wounds of his psyche open when evidence of that world is near: his psyche chooses the haunting, even against his will. Now Magwitch's return is real enough; adequately explained in terms of plot and motivation. Yet Dickens is concerned to surround him with some of the feeling of that kind of fate we have been considering, as though he were coming back into Pip's life largely because his image has remained in Pip's mind as an obsession.

We can even say, from this point of view, that Pip *needs* the return of Magwitch. His first experience of him coincided with his "first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things" (GE 1, 15), and this meant in effect his first vivid sense of his own identity and of its isolation. Sartre describes a similar experience in his book on Baudelaire:

Chacun a pu observer dans son enfance l'apparition fortuite et bouleversante de la conscience de soi ...

Cette intuition fulgurante est parfaitement vide: l'enfant vient d'acquérir la conviction qu'il n'est pas n'importe qui, or il devient précisément n'importe qui en acquérant cette conviction. Il est autre que les autres, cela est sûr; mais chacun des autres est autre pareillement. Il a fait l'épreuve purement négative de la séparation et son expérience a porté sur la forme universelle de la subjectivité, forme stérile que Hegel définit par l'égalité Moi=Moi. Que faire d'une découverte qui fait peur et ne paie pas? La plupart se hâtent de l'oublier. Mais l'enfant qui s'est rencontré lui-même dans le désespoir, la fureur et la jalousie axera toute sa vie sur la méditation stagnante de sa singularité formelle. (J-PS 21-3)

(Each of us was able to observe in childhood the fortuitous and shattering advent of self-consciousness ...

This lightning intuition is completely empty. The child has just acquired the conviction that she is not just anyone, but it is precisely by acquiring this conviction that she becomes just anyone. She feels, to be sure, that she is someone different from the others, but each of the others has the same feeling of being different from everyone else. The child has undergone a purely negative experience of separation and her experience assumes the form of universal subjectivism - a sterile form which Hegel defined by the equation I=I. What can we make of a discovery which frightens us and offers nothing in return? Most people contrive to forget it as quickly as possible. But the child who has become aware of himself as a separate being with a sense of despair, rage and jealousy will base his whole life on the fruitless contemplation of a singularity which is formal.) (J-PST 19-20)

Pip's case fits Baudelaire's description insofar as his first experience of self-consciousness occurs under emotional conditions that make it quite impossible for him to forget it altogether, so that he will always be troubled by a sense of his uniqueness, his separation from other people, his difference. What distinguishes his experience from that described by Sartre, however, is that in his case the experience of self is not a 'formal' one, not empty: it is filled by the experience of Magwitch (and that is itself an experience which isolates him, separates him from 'respectable society'). Magwitch, and every impression that coincides with his meeting with Magwitch, *is* himself, is his isolation, his uniqueness, what makes him different. He will try to repress this memory, but as we have seen: even without Magwitch's return it would be impossible to do so completely. He will never be happy until he has brought this experience to a conclusion. It survives in him as a complex of sensuous memories, not much reasoned about, that it takes only the slightest touch from outside to awaken.

3.

When Magwitch returns, it is not just Magwitch the person who returns, but a whole psychological state, a place in Pip's mind. As if to emphasize this, Dickens evokes in us - even before his appearance - a sense of déjà vu. We might not be able to place our sense of familiarity straight away, but stroke by stroke we are being taken back to the landscape of the opening of the book. A set of words, a rhythm, an image call up intimations of a set of words, a rhythm, an image that we have heard before, that are in fact embedded somewhere rather deep in our mind. The fourth sentence of Chapter 39 goes: "Our chambers were in Garden Court, down by the river" and recalls a phrase on the first page of the book: "Ours was the marsh country, down by the river ..." But the 'references' become fuller, completer, in the passage that soon follows:

> Business had taken Herbert on a journey to Marseilles. I was alone, and had a dull sense of being alone. Dispirited and anxious, long hoping that tomorrow or next week would clear my way, and long disappointed, I sadly missed the cheerful face and ready response of my friend.
>
> It was wretched weather; stormy and wet, stormy and wet; and mud, mud, mud, deep in all the streets. Day after day, a vast heavy veil had been driving over London from the East, and it drove still, as if in the East there were an Eternity of cloud and wind. So furious had been the gusts, that high buildings in town had had the lead stripped off their roofs; and in the country, trees had been torn up, and sails of windmills carried away; and gloomy accounts had come in from the coast of shipwreck and death. Violent blasts of rain had accompanied these rages of wind, and the day just closed as I sat down to read had been the worst of all.
>
> Alterations have been made in that part of the Temple since that time, and it has not now so lonely a character as it had then, nor is it so exposed to the river. We lived at the top of the last house, and the wind rushing up the river shook the house that night, like discharges of cannon, or breakings of a sea. When the rain came with it and dashed against the windows, I thought, raising my eyes to them as they rocked, that I might have fancied myself in a storm-beaten lighthouse. Occasionally, the smoke came rolling down the chimney as though it could not bear to go out into such a night; and when I set the doors open and looked down the staircase, the staircase lamps were blown out; and when I shaded my face with my hands and looked through the black windows (opening them ever so little was out of the question in the teeth of such wind and rain) I saw that the lamps in the court were blown out, and that the lamps on the bridges and the shore were shuddering, and that the coal fires in barges on the river were being carried away before the wind like red-hot splashes in the rain.
>
> I read with my watch upon the table, purposing to close my book at eleven o'clock. As I shut it, St. Paul's, and all the many church-clocks in the City -

some leading, some accompanying, some following - struck that hour. The sound was curiously flawed by the wind; and I was listening, and thinking how the wind assailed and tore it, when I heard a footstep on the stair. (GE 39, 271)

Owing to the situation of Pip's room (and notice how that situation is made to seem unique by the mention of 'alterations') his loneliness and isolation are very much those of the little boy on the marshes. His room is exposed to the river, and across that to the sea, very much his situation in the opening scene. Here, too, the wind is like a wild animal leaping out of its lair - we hear of "the wind rushing up the river" - and it makes the house shake, as Pip had shaken when, "a small bundle of shivers", he had been exposed to the wind and to harsh reality in general on that first occasion. From the East, from the sea, which was once a "distant savage lair" and is now a place where there is "an Eternity of cloud and wind", come the wind, rumours, news of disasters - as then had come the savage animal of the wind and the savage animal of the criminal. As then, *it all comes from there*, where a kind of 'Eternity' is louring. We even hear the cannons of the hulks, warning that a convict has escaped, as "the wind rushing up the river shook the house that night, like discharges of cannon, or breakings of a sea." Finally, the motif of angry fire makes its appearance again. It had first woven itself into the pattern with Pip's description of the sunset over the marshes, it had been there as Joe worked at his forge, it had come to life again in the flames of the torches "flung hissing into the water" at the embarking of the convicts. Now "the coal fires in barges on the river were being carried away before the wind like red-hot splashes in the rain".

This last touch is powerfully sensuous, and also sinister: the hot splashes contrast with the cold rain; one is aware of the blurred light through the downpour, the red-hot patches of colour starting out of the dark, the wild, spirit-like movement of the fire-balls as the wind carries them and they meet their enemy water in violence - there is a sense of terrible recklessness and freedom and potential danger. The phrase "carried away", which is used here for the

second time in this passage, is also significant. It is the function of the wind to 'carry away'. A few pages later we are to read:

> I relinquished the intention he had detected, for I knew him! Even yet, I could not recall a single feature, but I knew him! If the wind and the rain had driven away the intervening years, had scattered all the intervening objects, had swept us to the churchyard where we first stood face to face on such different levels, I could not have known my convict more distinctly than I knew him now, as he sat in the chair before the fire. (GE 39, 273)

Even while Pip is sitting at his desk (waiting, we might say, though he doesn't know it, for his convict to appear once again) we notice that he is clinging to something, fighting not to let something be swept away. We realize that his reading at the desk is the façade that holds his present life together, that it is the sort of ritual action we fall back on in times of isolation, so as not to lose the sense of identity that we have put together for ourselves. The image of the lighthouse attacked by the wind and the rain and the breakings of heavy seas is a symbol of the civilized, the made, attacked by the elemental - in this case it seems to stand for what we have made of ourselves, under attack from what has made us. And with quiet, tremendously suggestive power Dickens shows the erosion of what holds Pip to his sense of identity in time and place.

Herbert is absent. The "cheerful face" and "ready response" of Pip's friend would be enough to anchor Pip in his sense of being indeed this gentleman that he has become. But being alone, and with a dull sense of being alone, he cannot have this certainty.

Spatially, the elements build a ring of darkness around him, severing him from the civilization in the midst of which he lives. He tries to re-establish the relationship with 'outside'. But he daren't open his windows even a little - he is quite sealed off. He looks down the staircase and sees that the staircase lamps are blown out. He peers through the window and sees that the lamps in the court are out, and that the lamps on the bridges and the shore are shuddering - they are also being attacked. When he and Magwitch confront each other again, it is first of all across the space of a staircase without light. In this book, as I

have said already, a dark staircase is a symbol of the destruction of time; or rather it is a sign that *one* kind of time - distancing, placing time - has ceased to exist.

It ceases to exist when Pip recognizes Magwitch. It is as though "the wind and the rain had driven away the intervening years". But now already, while reading alone in his rooms, Pip is fighting against the erosion of his time-sense. "I read with my watch upon the table ... " - he is clinging to clock time, in order to protect himself against that vacuum which often besets one when alone; that loss of the sense of being in a particular time and place, which we fear because it leaves an opening for the resurgence of the unexpected from the past within us. The brittleness of clock time's protection seems to be symbolized by Dickens in the imprecision, as heard by Pip through the wind, of the City church-clocks: " .. St. Paul's, and all the many church-clocks in the City - some leading, some accompanying, some following - struck that hour. The sound was curiously flawed by the wind; and I was listening, and thinking how the wind assailed and tore it, when I heard a footstep on the stair." The footstep comes at the very moment when Pip is meditating on the distortion of 'time' by the wind. And his first reaction (showing the weakness of his defences) is to start "and awfully connect it with the footstep of [his] dead sister" (GE 39, 271). This is the first dip made by Pip's mind into the past. But he refuses to follow up this trick his psyche has played on him: "What nervous folly made me start ... matters not." (GE 39, 271) He dismisses the thought - and this dismissal is a piece of rational resistance on the part of his present, adult self. But the pressure put on this self does not let up. The footstep comes on, stumbling only momentarily.

4.

In his account of how Pip comes to recognize Magwitch, Dickens makes us aware of what is mysterious about the phenomenon of recognition - which always seems to stir the depths of one's mind, disturbing and throwing up more material than the bare act of recognizing would seem to require. Recognition, we know, is often disturbing, especially when it happens on the unconscious level before one becomes conscious of its meaning: in that case one becomes aware of a face as attracting one, requiring from one, meaning something inexplicably special for one - and one is flooded with a sense of how little of one's own self one knows. For certain, recognition is never a superficial process. We do not recognize a face because we have made an inventory of its features, for these features are never the same again. When anxious about recognizing a face, we often do try to form a conscious picture of it in our mind; when the time comes we recognize the face, but not because it resembles our reconstruction. The indescribable shock and delight of seeing a loved woman's face again takes place because her reality surprises us, as though it has deliberately avoided all mental images we have made of it; and yet some true image of her we must have held somewhere in our mind, for we recognize her - this different her - as being the same. It is not by our conscious memories that we recognize a face, it seems, but by some total picture we have built up out of unconscious impressions. And on the level of the mind where this kind of information is to be retrieved, it seems the material is not to be found stored in separate hermetically sealed boxes, but in 'involute' form; as the reappearing face releases the memories that strictly pertain to it, it also releases what accompanies them; as a result the mind that recognizes is subjected to a flood of intense emotion, for it is being invaded by involuntary memories, whether these ever become conscious as particular, distinct memories or not: it is being taken back in time.

I think that by and large the reader keeps pace with Pip in his recognition of Magwitch. When the stranger comes up the stairs he does not know it is the convict - he does not know this until the moment when Pip knows. And yet there is something going on in his mind that is like the first stirrings of recognition. The reader feels that he has moved into a different atmosphere from that he was in a moment ago - an atmosphere that is not unfamiliar to him though he cannot yet place it. He feels the same is happening to Pip. And he knows that the stranger is the cause of the change.

> Whoever was below had stopped on seeing my lamp, for all was quiet.
> "There is someone down there, is there not?" I called out, looking down.
> "Yes," said a voice from the darkness beneath.
> "What floor do you want?"
> "The top. Mr. Pip."
> "That is my name. - There is nothing the matter?"
> "Nothing the matter," returned the voice. And the man came on. (GE 39, 272)

Something in the stop-go movements of the stranger, something in his wary hesitation and his deliberateness, are perhaps all that can link him for us with the convict of the opening chapters. Though perhaps the abruptness of his speech - "The top. Mr. Pip." "Nothing the matter" - recalls a much rougher curtness in his utterances in the first chapter, an abruptness in the man himself which had affected even Dickens's style in describing him there. For Dickens had introduced him then in a sentence without a main verb: "A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with ..." and this maybe expressed an aspect of his character that has remained even in the very different Magwitch we meet now. The associations are very tenuous, yet they have to do with the very essence of Magwitch. When he takes his hat off - "Then, I saw that his head was furrowed and bald, and that the long iron-gray hair grew only on its sides" - there is just the faintest awareness of a memory, he is just to the slightest degree the ghost of the man "with an old rag tied round his head" (GE 1, 16).

Full recognition comes only when we get a larger dose of Magwitch's speech.

> "You're a game one," he returned, shaking his head at me with a deliberate affection, at once most unintelligible and most exasperating; "I'm glad you've growed up, a game one! But don't catch hold of me. You'd be sorry afterwards to have done it."

I relinquished the intention he had detected, for I knew him! Even yet, I could not recall a single feature, but I knew him! If the wind and the rain had driven away the intervening years, had scattered all the intervening objects, had swept us to the churchyard where we first stood face to face on such different levels, I could not have known my convict more distinctly than I knew him now, as he sat in the chair before the fire. No need to take a file from his pocket and show it to me; no need to take the handkerchief from his neck and twist it round his head; no need to hug himself with both arms, and take a shivering turn across the room, looking back at me for recognition. I knew him before he gave me one of those aids, though, a moment before I had not been conscious of remotely suspecting his identity. (GE 39, 273)

The last sentence seems to imply that Pip, like the reader, had been *unconsciously* aware of who the stranger was - though there has been no specific clue, no obvious point of resemblance. Pip's mind has had to dive deep to come up with its conclusions; the shock of Magwitch's return is an *inner* shock for Pip. It does not mean simply a difficult situation, or even just a moral dilemma; it means the return, all in a flood, of unmanageable material out of his subconscious. Magwitch understands this. He knows the past is flooding back into Pip. That is why he so delightedly acts out his former role for him. But he misunderstands Pip's feelings about the past completely. Every action he goes through recalls one of the things that were most horrible to the child Pip - and these things have not yet lost all their power to alarm him. However, Pip is not really attending to these outward actions. Magwitch is hobbling round the room hugging himself, and to Pip this play-acting is like an irrelevant dream on the fringes of his consciousness. What is real for him is what is going on inside him: his return to the cold day - in the graveyard - out on the marshes.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MAGWITCH

1.

We can best explain 'where Pip is now at' if we see his history as being closely comparable to that of a man suffering from a neurosis. His original meeting with Magwitch is a traumatic experience destined to have an unbalancing effect on his later life. Being a child, Pip cannot cope with this early experience in an adequate way. The memory of it remains as a threat, a dark secret ready to start up again and overwhelm him. When he becomes a gentleman he suppresses the secret still further, so that the surface life he lives begins to appear hollow to himself, as if it were a mere role that hides his true identity. His true self seems a dreadful secret to him, a secret that would be revealed to the world were the traumatic event known.

Then comes Magwitch's return. The conditions of Pip's first emotional harrowing are reproduced, and the sickness is released. The first result is that he is returned - almost, but not quite - to his childish impotence. He is overwhelmed by the recurrence of the emotions of childhood. The sickness has come to its crisis.

What remains for the future? It is evident, first of all, that Pip's problem does not end with the practical problem of what to do with Magwitch and with his money. Magwitch represents for him a huge emotional confusion that he must learn to master. The practical problems are important in that it is largely through resolving them that Pip is kept actively moving towards a resolution of his feelings about Magwitch the man. But these practical problems are not in themselves the most important thing for him.

We are struck by Pip's singleness of purpose, at this stage, in wanting to *free* himself of Magwitch; in fact free himself from all of that part of his

inner life which has centred around Magwitch and his expectations. Miss Havisham and Estella, being part of his self-deception, must be exorcized too. And Pip never considers what his life will be like when he has succeeded in casting out these demons: he makes no provision for the future in which he will have escaped them - neither practically nor in terms of what inner life will be left him. All his energy is involved in casting out the psychological compulsions that have been driving him since his childhood and through his youth. And at this stage we can sympathize fully with such a wish; it is necessary because Pip's life has become intolerable to him.

Pip's struggle to come to terms with and excise the psychological forces that are overwhelming him can be seen as analogical to the process of psychoanalysis. Pip must recall his childhood experience, understand his helpless fear and revulsion, and so overcome them. This done, he can set his house - or what is left of it - in order. The process requires active sympathy and understanding. Pip does not merely neutralize Magwitch; he creates the conditions by which Magwitch can undergo a transmutation of significance in his consciousness. He learns increasingly that he must come to terms with Magwitch as someone with whom he is personally involved in the most intimate way. To free himself from him he must first commit himself to him. He must learn to forgive him, and, ultimately, even to love him.

The point is that Pip's involvement with Magwitch is more than a side-issue in his life - it is a fate: *his* fate. To bring this home, Dickens uses the images of the wind and the rain, first to give us a sense of the unity and depth of Pip's life, insofar as it has been lived under the shadow of Magwitch, and then to express the tumult of his mind when it discovers its intimate involvement with the man.

First:

> If the wind and the rain had driven away the intervening years, had scattered all the intervening objects, had swept us to the churchyard where we first stood face to face on such different levels, I could not have known my convict more distinctly than I knew him now, as he sat in the chair before the fire. (GE 39, 273)

Here the wind and the rain, though ruthless, are also cleansing agents that sweep away the meaningless debris of Pip's artificial life, and return him to himself - to a self that is real and unchangeable.

This essential self is rendered by Dickens through his use of repetitive configurations of imagery in constructing Pip's experience. The sense of déjà vu haunting the scene just preceding Magwitch's reappearance is an instance of this technique: in *Great Expectations* we have a recurrent picture of Pip attacked by the wind from the sea while in a vulnerable position - a configuration of factors that indicates how the drama of his imaginative life is principally bound up with the appearance and reappearance of Magwitch.

Thus, in Chapter 39, the wind and the rain that have swept Pip back to his elemental reality grow one with Magwitch's voice:

> Throughout, I had seemed to myself to attend more to the wind and the rain than to him; even now, I could not separate his voice from those voices, though those were loud and his was silent. (GE 39, 278)

And the wind and the rain remain through the most painful part of Pip's mental confusion and loneliness - the time while he is waiting for Herbert:

> When I awoke, without having parted in my sleep with the perception of my wretchedness, the clocks of the Eastward churches were striking five, the candles were wasted out, the fire was dead, and the wind and rain intensified the thick black darkness. (GE 39, 280)

And again:

> I doubt if a ghost could have been more terrible to me, up in those lonely rooms in the long evenings and long nights, with the rain and the wind always rushing by. (GE 40, 290-1)

In coming to terms with the man Magwitch, Pip comes to terms with his fate: he masters it, understands it and rounds it off. But because of the kind of

person that Magwitch is, the drama of Pip's imagination, that Magwitch plays such a large part in, has an even richer ending than this suggests. The fact that Pip learns to accept Magwitch - accepts him, as we shall see, as a father - involves our recognition of a symbolic maturation on Pip's part, the broadening of the basis of his life to a certain universality. For Magwitch, in *Great Expectations*, embodies a universal. Regarding him as Dickens presents him, we see that he represents - even more than Joe does - the complete man.

I mean various things by this. I mean that as a man he has completed himself. He has transformed a life which began with his being the plaything of an indifferent and unjust world into a life directed by him according to his own perception of meaning. I mean also that through him Dickens sets a standard of human achievement that is unpretentious and realistic, so that with regard to him we can say: This is enough. The man is a human being. That is, no more can be asked of a human being than what Magwitch, in the course of his life, gives.

Finally there is the matter of Magwitch's death. There are certain tests by which Dickens measures his people. One of these is the death-bed scene. Magwitch, as the issue of his whole life and in contradiction to all early indications, is a man who can grow old and die with a rare resignation - a species of resignation at the opposite pole from mere stoicism or surrender. The affirmative nature of his attitude to life is endorsed when, at the end of his life, and in spite of the fact that in his youth he appears to have failed as an actual husband and father, Dickens symbolically declares that he is worthy of fathering a son in Pip.

Now, in making these claims for Magwitch it is necessary to point out that the book nearly always presents his qualities and achievements in a sharply ironical light, showing them as issuing paradoxically out of the weakness of his position. An example of this paradox and irony will perhaps serve to highlight Dickens's technique:

"What were you brought up to be?"
"A warmint, dear boy."
He answered quite seriously, and used the word as if it denoted some profession. (GE 40, 283)

The earnestness with which Magwitch makes his absurd reply highlights one of his qualities, the saintly[1] quality of dedication. The dedication is the more intensely there for the absurdity of its object; there is pathos in the fact that Magwitch's would-be professional seriousness can in the nature of things only be brought to bear on what is strictly a non-profession.

The poetic method is an ancient one, and is perhaps the only method available for the definition of the qualities of the saint, as opposed to those of the just man. It is a method employed, for instance, by Hasidic rabbis, who define spiritual qualities by lodging them with the worldlily incompetent or even criminal: the child, the fool, the thief. W.H. Auden gives an example of this kind of reasoning in a chapter of *The Dyer's Hand* which I have already referred to (see p.VI.4-5). Let me quote again what he has to say about Falstaff:

> Then he rejoices in his reputation as a fornicator with whom no woman is safe alone, but the Falstaff on stage is too old to fornicate, and it is impossible to imagine him younger. All we see him do is defend a whore against a bully, set her on his knee and make her cry out of affection and pity. What in the real world is promiscuous lust, the treatment of other persons as objects of sexual greed, becomes in the comic world of play a symbol for the charity that loves all neighbours without distinction. (WHA 203)

The difference, in Magwitch's case, is that he not only symbolises the qualities we perceive through him - symbolizes them in a comic world of play - he actually possesses them himself. This is as much as to say that his human achievements surmount the paradoxicality placed on them by outside fate. Of no-one else do we feel so strongly that he is driven - (a) by others, and (b) by the restlessness of the life within him; yet it is he above all who seems to have attained to the security of a self-determined life, and it is he whose violent instincts and impulses are resolved most convincingly in a final peace.

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1. In the pages which follow, the idea of saintliness refers to a kind of whole-heartedness in embracing a path, not to the choice of one path rather than another.

Again, Magwitch is ignorant. He is confused by the affairs of men. He even does not know to what uses to put the objects that fall into his hands. So he hacks notches into Pip's table, has funny ideas about books, and in particular misuses his bible. Yet Magwitch's very ignorance becomes, in the context of his life, a kind of wisdom. Objects and events have not, for him, the significations given by common consent; they have their own particular meaning, which the needs of his life have endowed them with. These needs range from simple self-preservation to the most spiritual and creative aspects of a human life. Magwitch's way of life is a living parable, complete in itself, in which objects and events are transformed by his imagination.

Again, Magwitch is blind - and in nothing more than in his plan to make a gentleman of Pip; yet it is in setting out to put this plan into effect that he enters his true vocation of becoming a man. Magwitch dies under an illusion - the illusion that Pip will continue to prosper as a rich 'gentleman' off his money - and yet, at the centre of the illusion is a truth: the truth that Pip has accepted *him*.

3.

I have written so far as though Magwitch and what he stands for were to become for Pip, through Pip's acceptance of him, a permanent imaginative possession. As it turns out, this will only partially be the case. Certainly, Magwitch's humanity enables Pip to recognize his own true human position, and to start his life over again with energy. Yet he does not carry any picture of Magwitch over with him into his new life - in fact, it is as though he rejects the image of Magwitch (on his death) as something he has done with. Probably the memory still contains too many painful elements for him to wish to cultivate

it, now that his duty towards the man is done. Nevertheless, the reader is, I think, disappointed that Magwitch is no longer a part of Pip's imaginative drama. Or is the disappointment an indication that the imaginative drama of Pip's life has ceased forever?

We might put the question why Dickens has gone to so much trouble to create Magwitch as a symbol for a complete human life if he has so limited a significance for Pip in the end. The answer is that Dickens has created Magwitch with one eye on Pip and one on the reader. The reader does not need to discard or forget the significance that Magwitch has for his feeling and thought, even after the book is done. It is with the effect Magwitch has on the reader that I shall be concerned in this chapter.

The significance he has is made palpable to us by many different strokes of art - not only by realistic portrayal. It is important, for instance, that we usually see him by way of Pip's consciousness, and that this consciousness is only very seldom a collected one. It is also important that we only really see him at distinct crises and climaxes of his life, when his energy for life is fully extended. These factors tend to make Magwitch appear superhuman - for better or for worse.

This effect is, of course, calculated by Dickens. The book's Magwitch is not merely a realistic portrayal. Magwitch is a literary figure, intended to convey the idea of a possibility open to man. Yet it is important that Magwitch would be a possibility even in a totally realistic portrayal. That is, the 'completeness' of Magwitch is a kind of completeness which would be credible even in a more conventional portrayal - he is real enough to be looked at without distortion. Yet it is the distortions that make him - and the 'completeness' he stands for - dramatically effective.

Dickens uses various symbolic devices to make us see Magwitch under the aspect of the vitality and energy of his grip on life. It has been shown already (see p.V.30-31) how we gain a sense of these from his very suffering and

even from his sickness. There is also the recurrent motif of Magwitch's 'hunger'. Sometimes this motif is rather horrible, as in the following passage:

> "I'll eat my breakfast afore they're the death of me," said he. "I'd do that, if I was going to be strung up to that there gallows as there is over there, directly afterwards. I'll beat the shivers so far, *I'll* bet you." (GE 3, 28)

Horrible as this enslavement to hunger is, it is nevertheless given a human flavour by Magwitch's consciousness and acknowledgement of it. He not only is hungry, but he knows he is hungry - alarmingly and absurdly hungry - he can stand back that far from his hunger, and see it wryly as being potentially self-destructive. Of course this is all mingled with a coarse recklessness that makes Magwitch hateful to us for this moment.

A few minutes later we see him in a different light and we are forced to change our attitude to him:

> Pitying his desolation, and watching him as he gradually settled down upon the pie, I made bold to say, "I am glad you enjoy it."
> "Did you speak?"
> "I said I was glad you enjoyed it."
> "Thankee, my boy. I do." (GE 3, 28)

This is an instance of Pip's exercizing a humanizing influence on Magwitch through his own natural courtesy. Magwitch suddenly comes alive as a rich human being. There is a certain effort involved. He has to tear himself away from his food first: "Did you speak?" But then, in the conscious understatement of "Thankee, my boy. I do." he is wry and humourous in a way characteristic of the whole man. He is conscious that the boy cannot have any idea of just how much he needs the food, and how he relishes it - and this consciousness (of the enormity of his hunger and his enjoyment) is a private joke of his own that comes out in the brevity of his words.

Magwitch makes so many references to his need for food that one comes to see this need as being more than a simple physical desire: one starts to see it as symbolic, first of the deprivations - also spiritual deprivations - his life has been submitted to; and, perhaps more important, one also sees it as symbolic of a special hunger for life in Magwitch, which starts expressing itself

in the most basic needs, but which goes far beyond them.

Magwitch himself seems puzzled as to whether he is exceptional in this respect (in experiencing hunger, that is) - certainly society has never behaved as though he had any right to his needs. So when he explains that he has stolen food from Joe, he says by way of excuse: "A man can't starve; at least I can't. I took some wittles ... " (GE 5, 45)

Later, on his return, he confesses to Pip:

> "I'm a heavy grubber, dear boy," he said, as a polite kind of apology when he made an end of his meal, "but I always was. If it had been in my constitution to be a lighter grubber, I might ha' got into lighter trouble ..." (GE 40, 284)

The constitutional heavy grubbing goes together with, and expresses, a constitutionally strong instinct of self-preservation - a 'coarseness' that terrifies and repels Pip on their first meeting. It is interesting that Dickens feels the need to soften the impact of Magwitch's capacity for heavy grubbing immediately, by bringing in, as a counter-active element, his love of smoking.

> " ... Similarly, I must have my smoke. When I was first hired out as shepherd t'other side the world, it's my belief I should ha' turned into a molloncolly mad sheep myself, if I hadn't a had my smoke." (GE 40, 284)

It is as though Dickens were actually alarmed by the capacity for life with which he has endowed Magwitch - as though this made Magwitch share too much in the goblin-like spirit of a Quilp, say - and he must hasten to assert other, palliative, values in Magwitch. For Magwitch's need for his smoke is connected with his patience and the philosophical side of his temperament, qualities that work against the excesses of his crude vitality. And yet in a sense Magwitch's understanding of his need for a smoke - and what goes with that - is another instance of the deliberateness and thoroughness with which Magwitch sits down to the business of living.

The final and most deliberately stressed link in the chain of references to Magwitch's need to eat comes when he tells his life-story to Pip and Herbert:

"... 'This is a terrible hardened one', they says to prison wisitors, picking out me. 'May be said to live in jails, this boy.' Then they looked at me, and I looked at them, and they measured my head, some on 'em - they had better a-measured my stomach ..." (GE 42, 297)

The direction of Dickens's polemic is clear: crime does not derive from a deficiency of intelligence, but from an excess of hunger. Or an excess of the capacity for hunger. Magwitch might be saying: "If you were to lay aside your hypocrisy, gentlemen, then you would be forced to admit that what makes up the criminal mentality is not stupidity but an overdeveloped need to make demands on life and society, to claim sustenance from them. We are those who insist on the fact of our presence on earth, who refuse exclusion. The howling infant does just this, and a similar outsize need lies beneath all exceptional achievement - such as my making a gentleman of Pip. On the basis of what, then, are we to be so separated from the rest of humanity, if not for the very intensity with which humanity's claim on life lives in us?" It is as an exemplary representative of humanity that Magwitch is somewhat monstrous - he is monstrous in being alive in a larger-than-life way.

It seems possible to me that Dickens put an extra-large portion of himself into Magwitch, particularly of that self which was the would-be Victorian actor. Magwitch is larger than life particularly in the drama of his gestures. This is apparent in his terrorization of Pip in the first chapters, but it is a quality which recurs also on his return, for instance in his response to Pip's offer to repay him for the two one-pound notes he had sent.

He watched me as I laid my purse upon the table and opened it, and he watched me as I separated two one-pound notes from its contents. They were clean and new, and I spread them out and handed them over to him. Still watching me, he laid them one upon the other, folded them long-wise, gave them a twist, set fire to them at the lamp, and dropped the ashes into the tray.

"May I make so bold," he said then, with a smile that was like a frown, and with a frown that was like a smile, "as ask you *how* you have done well, since you and me was out on them lone shivering marshes?" (GE 39, 275)

To burn money is always impressive, but Magwitch gives the gesture an emphasis of his own. Such deliberateness is a product of the authority of a caste or class,

and of a set of experiences that heightens the significance of such an act. Magwitch acts out of the authority of the man (a) who has not lived a protected life as Pip has, (b) who knows where his money comes from and what it is worth to him, because he has earned every bit of it himself.

More important is the dramatic intelligence of the act itself. Let us take it that Pip and Magwitch are playing games. Each has his own purpose, and each makes his move. Pip has made his move (which he believes will be final) by returning the two one-pound notes; Magwitch responds by deliberately burning them, thus annihilating Pip's move. In other words, he is asserting that Pip can in no way repay his debt to him. Having reduced Pip's gambit to ashes (by refusing it, but also showing that he is not afraid of it), and returned him, as it were, to square one, Magwitch can now move into the attack, characteristically taking up the role of the cross-questioner.

Now let us see what there is to be said about that "smile that was like a frown" and "frown that was like a smile". Partly, of course, this is Magwitch's equivalent of Jaggers's biting his finger at witnesses. Of all games that men play, Magwitch is naturally attracted to the court-room game. He has had repeated experience of it; its outcome has more than once affected him deeply; being the kind of person he is, he would inevitably be impressed by its drama. He believes that due to his experience this is one game he knows how to control - but, of course, while believing he is orthodox, he plays the game in his own inimitable idiosyncratic fashion. His imitation of Jaggers is like a huge lampoon - and yet in human terms Magwitch is so much more serious than Jaggers in the use to which he puts Jaggers's techniques. He is fighting for a human relationship that means almost everything to him - not merely for a prestigious victory.

While discussing the "smile that was like a frown" and the "frown that was like a smile", we must see that it conveys more than just the interrogator's frown of threat and smile of imminent triumph: it is a way of conveying Magwitch's watchful attentiveness. This becomes even more apparent shortly afterwards, when

Magwitch remains silent to let one of his questions sink in.

He emptied his glass, got up, and stood at the side of the fire with his heavy brown hand on the mantel-shelf. He put a foot up to the bars, to dry and warm it, and the wet boot began to steam; but he neither looked at it, nor at the fire, but steadily looked at me. It was only now that I began to tremble. (GE 39, 275)

This look might remind the reader of another look that Magwitch gives Pip, though it is superficially a look of a different kind. The scene is the marshes, at the beginning of the book, when the convicts are recaptured. Pip is anxious to convey to Magwitch that he is not responsible for putting the soldiers on his trail.

I looked at him eagerly when he looked at me, and slightly moved my hands and shook my head. I had been waiting for him to see me, that I might try to assure him of my innocence. It was not at all expressed to me that he even comprehended my intention, for he gave me a look that I did not understand, and it all passed in a moment. But if he had looked at me for an hour or for a day, I could not have remembered his face ever afterwards, as having been more attentive. (GE 5, 44)

For the *steadiness* of the look there, we have the *energy* here - an energy not only in the eyes but in the whole face, seeing it is the face Pip remembers afterwards. This is an instance of where the whole of Magwitch rises to a situation or a problem. In my opinion it is almost impossible to overstress the importance of such moments for Dickens. It is characteristic that at such a key moment he should introduce one of his pet interests: the relativity of human time - the way one moment can hold the importance (for the memory) of an hour or a day of the same fare: "But if he had looked at me for an hour or for a day, I could not have remembered his face ever afterwards, as having been more attentive." It is a magnificent hyperbole - particularly to express attentiveness, concentration. Dickens is making it clear to us that Magwitch has an amazing faculty: a readiness, even an eagerness, to raise all his powers of attentiveness and understanding in a moment and bring them to bear on the subtleties of a life-situation. He has only a fraction of a second to judge Pip's guilt or innocence, and there is no hesitation, only a total concentration. When I speak of Magwitch's 'hunger for life', I intend the phrase to cover this kind of spiritual energy and eagerness too.

We do not immediately hear what Magwitch's judgement has been. A page on from the last quotation comes this:

My convict never looked at me, except that once. While we stood in the hut, he stood before the fire looking thoughtfully at it, or putting up his feet by turns upon the hob, and looking thoughtfully at them as if he pitied them for their recent adventures. Suddenly, he turned to the sergeant, and remarked - (GE 5, 45)

After this longish period of cogitation, Magwitch comes out with his statement that he has stolen 'wittles' and a file from Joe's house, thus getting Pip off the hook, and showing that he believes Pip has remained faithful to him. He has been brewing this plan to protect Pip while warming his boots and staring into the fire. (In the later scene, when questioning Pip, he looks at him steadily while he leaves his one boot to steam against the bars of the fire - does the steaming of the boot represent the fuming of Magwitch's mind?) The point I wish to make is that Magwitch's plan to get Pip off the hook, suddenly and deliberately executed, is, under the circumstances, no mean intellectual and human achievement. At a time when he might be expected to be caught up in the black nature of his own affairs, he has the time and imagination to put himself into Pip's situation, and consider a little boy's difficulties. The plan he evolves is also a plan which involves self-denial - for it means he must never again, for all he knows, show any notice of his friend. He carries off the part with the mastery of a consummate actor, "turning his eyes on Joe in a moody manner, and without the least glance at me." (GE 5, 45).

All this is as nothing beside the instance that strikes me as the most powerful example of Magwitch's wisdom, or patience, or life-readiness, or whatever one cares to call it. This is when, after looking forward to a joyous scene of recognition and reunion with Pip, Pip fails to recognize him, and repulses him.

"What do you mean?" said I, half suspecting him to be mad.

He stopped in his looking at me, and slowly rubbed his right hand over his head. "It's disappointing to a man," he said, in a coarse, broken voice, "arter having looked for'ard so distant, and come so fur; but you're not to blame for that - neither on us is to blame for that. I'll speak in half a minute. Give me half a minute, please."

He sat down on a chair that stood before the fire, and covered his forehead with his large brown veinous hands. I looked at him attentively then, and recoiled a little from him; but I did not know him. (GE 39, 272-3)

Magwitch had expected no less from his reunion with Pip than a blinding moment of happiness in which the whole work of his life would be consummated and his longing would, from being a faraway dream, be made reality, be made flesh. It is no less than an incarnation of his life's work and purpose that he has been anticipating. Such an anticipation could never be fulfilled. Life is not like that; it does not permit such things. What is amazing in Magwitch is his positive response to the disappointment. His first reaction is to assure himself that he cannot blame Pip. He has been living under certain illusions. But the health of his response is that he can see this - can judge himself - and acquit himself. He cannot truly be blamed for his illusions either. There is a total relinquishment of the desire to have the moment as he wished to have it. That expectation has gone forever, and he throws the possibility overboard without wasting time on regrets. Pip was to have recognized him as a friend, companion, benefactor. He can't have that recognition spontaneously. Well, then, he will fight for it.

In these few moments Magwitch gathers himself for the battle ahead, in which, through a great richness and versatility of means, involving humour, acting, game-playing, a stubborn assertion of realities, he will convince Pip of his 'true' situation vis-à-vis himself. He is gathering energy for the vital game he is to play, a game that he stage-manages with magnificent virtuosity - think of the acting out of 'himself as a convict', the burning of the notes, the cross-questioning.

In this gathering of energies and concentration to deal with a new problem, (the expected situation having been shattered), we are given a vivid sense of Magwitch's physical presence. His "large brown veinous hands", his "coarse, broken voice", give the grain and fibre of the man, and are objective expressions of the soundness and steadiness of his intelligence, working on its own and in its own way, finally to unfold itself in the rich play of faculties with which he convinces Pip.

I am aware of all the ironies that live around this intellectual effort. Magwitch is himself not aware of the whole of the truth of his situation - and when he convinces Pip of what he sees as the realities, he does not liberate Pip, but goes near to destroying him. However, it is the intellectual effort in itself I wish to concentrate on, the mental act; and I cannot find it anything but remarkable. Magwitch responds to a total reversal of his expectations with a readiness, shrewdness, and generosity which contrasts with Pip's helpless response to the reversal of his.

4.

As a man who reaches out for a cup and brings it to his lips does so in the most direct way, if he does not do it affectedly, and yet does it in a way that is unique to him, so Magwitch's intelligence seems to be direct in reaching out, grasping the point, and dealing with it; yet at the same time it seems to move along a path that is unique to him. Moreover Magwitch's intelligence moves in specially idiosyncratic paths because he has formed his own picture of the world, having lived in isolation from all shared culture. The idiosyncrasy of his world is a source of comedy. But it is also a source of awe. For the pristine originality of Magwitch's interpretations makes us aware in a fundamental way of the whole process of man's interpretation of the world, and of his way of making a home for himself in it (for instance by using the objects around him, or giving them symbolic significance). This is in fact another aspect of the way Magwitch seems to stand, as an individual, for the species man: he enacts in comparative isolation the human task - generally a cultural, communal task - of giving imaginative significance to things so that they will fix and

affirm his identity.

It is largely the sense of Magwitch's having a powerful life quite independent of his own that is so terrifying to Pip during the first days of Magwitch's stay.

> Words cannot tell what a sense I had, at the same time, of the dreadful mystery that he was to me. When he fell asleep of an evening, with his knotted hands clenching the sides of the easy-chair, and his bald head, tattooed with deep wrinkles, falling forward on his breast, I would sit and look at him, wondering what he had done, and loading him with all the crimes in the Calendar, until the impulse was powerful on me to start up and fly from him.
>
> .....
>
> When he was not asleep, or playing a complicated kind of Patience with a ragged pack of cards of his own - a game that I never saw before nor since, and in which he recorded his winnings by sticking his jack-knife into the table - when he was not engaged in either of these pursuits, he would ask me to read to him - "Foreign language, dear boy!" (GE 40, 290-1)

It would be wrong to imagine that Pip is frightened by the sleeping Magwitch only because of the crimes he is then free to imagine lie on his head. It is also that Magwitch's sleep locks him into an alienness that Pip has no way of entering. Dickens again brings forward those aspects of Magwitch's physique that most indicate the unshareable experience he has lived through: the knotted hands and the bald head tattooed with wrinkles. As when he is eating, Pip is aware of being excluded from his world. He has probably never sat in an armchair before, yet he possesses it, "his knotted hands clenching the side". Pip's easy-chair is transformed, when Magwitch sleeps in it, into something that is no longer his own.

Magwitch's card-game is another thing that makes us vividly aware of his possessing a life entirely apart from Pip and Pip's world. All Magwitch's possessions are like charms that hold his personality together in a way he has worked out solely for himself. Each is connected with a ritual. The pack of cards, ragged, that could only belong to him, are connected with the ritual of the mysterious game of Patience, and with the ritual of marking his winnings in a way that he cannot forgo, even when circumstances make it highly inappropriate. The clasp-knife itself is a ritual object, used for eating - and borne in mind, quite consciously, as the instrument for a last-ditch defence. It is interesting

that Magwitch should have this last function in mind constantly - it is part of his readiness. It is also interesting that the function of eating and the function of last-ditch self-defence should be united for him, and symbolized in the one object. The fusion of the two significances supports all Pip's feelings about his way of eating, the way it is steeped in suspicion, aggression, desperation. My main point, however, is that both objects - the pack of cards and the knife - are psychologically necessary for Magwitch, necessary for his mental preparedness and endurance. The few things that he carries about with him hold his personality together - make up, between them, a world.

The jack-knife makes an appearance on Herbert's return.

> - I was roused by the welcome footsteps on the staircase. Provis, who had been asleep too, staggered up at the noise I made, and in an instant I saw his jack-knife shining in his hand. (GE 40, 291)

Magwitch having been reassured by Pip, the jack-knife disappears, and something else appears.

> He was stopped in his running on and in his shaking hands with me, by seeing Provis. Provis, regarding him with a fixed attention, was slowly putting up his jack-knife, and groping in another pocket for something else. (GE 40, 291)

It is his bible.

> "It's all right, dear boy!" said Provis, coming forward, with his little clasped black book, and then addressing himself to Herbert. "Take it in your right hand! Lord strike you dead on the spot, if ever you split in any way sumever! Kiss it!" (GE 40, 291)

Magwitch's bible is really the most interesting of his possessions.

> To state that my terrible patron carried this little black book about the world solely to swear people on in cases of emergency, would be to state what I never quite established - but this I can say, that I never knew him to put it to any other use. The book itself had the appearance of having been stolen from some court of justice, and perhaps his knowledge of its antecedents, combined with his own experience in that wise, gave him a reliance on its powers as a sort of legal spell or charm. On this first occasion of his producing it, I recalled how he had made me swear fidelity in the churchyard long ago, and how he had described himself last night as always swearing to his resolutions in his solitude. (GE 40, 287)

Magwitch's bible is a charm. This does not mean that it has a merely symbolic function for him: while deriving its life from its symbolic antecedents, it is expected by him, illogically, to have practical powers. Magwitch is just

like the savage who takes a piece of Nature, a cow or a bit of wood, endows it with the significance of the whole, and then expects it to give him practical powers over that whole, over Nature. Like the savage, Magwitch uses his charm to control the hostile world that controls his destiny. Only whereas for the savage this hostile world is constituted by nature, for Magwitch it is constituted by the institutions and powers of other men. The 'swearing-bible' represents for him some foothold in the world of cunning and power and domination that he has fallen foul of. When he produces the bible for Herbert's use, he does so with a great relish of his own cunning and a sense of triumph, as of having mastered the world that once mastered him. It is these feelings and their inappropriateness and pathos that provide the real force of the comedy. If we could not sympathize with Magwitch he would merely be laughable in the way that a savage in the midst of civilization would have appeared laughable to most people in, say, the eighteenth century. The bible, and the swearing, can be nothing to Herbert (who has no means of understanding their rationale) but a rather alarming oddity. And mere oddity is a poor source of laughter. The real comedy comes when Herbert's astonishment is brought into contact with our understanding.

Perhaps we should see Magwitch as a savage who, in his magic, seeks to propitiate the culture that has enslaved him. Conrad writes of a dying Congolese in *Heart of Darkness*:

> He had a bit of worsted round his neck - Why? Where did he get it? Was it a badge - an ornament - a charm - a propitiatory act? Was there any idea at all connected with it? It looked startling round his black neck, this bit of white thread from beyond the seas. (JC 67)

As the Congolese has his bit of worsted from the European civilization that has destroyed his way of life, Magwitch has his bible (probably) from a law-court. That he has probably stolen it from there adds to the psychologically true humour of the situation: Magwitch is trying to use his native thief's cunning to steal a piece of the magical cunning of official society and annex it to his own.

As is implied in the Conrad passage, the act is not a logical one - it does not contain an idea carried through to its conclusions. The belief behind Magwitch's evaluation of the bible is that this bible plays its part in a totally magical ritual - that of the law-court - and that its production compels the victim in the dock inevitably to confess the truth. Yet Magwitch has witnessed lying in court; he has seen the court used as an instrument to pervert justice, and pervert it incomprehensibly against himself. All this does not prevent him from having an implicit belief that the bible will compel Herbert to keep his oath of silence. The illogicality of this belief is credible enough. The more irrational, incomprehensible, arbitrary the hostile forces are that the practiser of magic wishes to counteract, the more thoroughly he will sink his credence in his charms - even when he believes those charms to have their force from participation in just those hostile forces which he distrusts.

Magwitch hopes to participate in the (for him) incomprehensible system of 'mastery' and 'control of one's destiny' as they exist in the world - a system that he sees ritualized and symbolized in the law-courts. Hence the man who really understands the courts becomes a magus. Jaggers is in a real sense Magwitch's patron saint or guardian spirit. Magwitch regards him as an ally, who confers power on him and whom he can learn from, but whom he can no more control completely than a sorcerer can control his demon.

Magwitch's trusts are perhaps always an expression of his powerlessness. Yet in spite of its meaning's basis lying in impotence, superstition, self-deception, the bible has a very real positive value for Magwitch. It is part of his method of fighting alienation and loneliness by constituting the elements of a complete world around himself. The bible from the law-courts, the cross-questioner's method, the admiration for Jaggers, represent an attempt on Magwitch's part to come to terms with the world of 'power and mastery within the actual'. It is clear that the elevation of Pip to the rank of gentleman is another such attempt. While Magwitch is misguided and impotent in nearly every case, the

attempt (symbolized by the bible) to come to terms mentally with the problem of mastery keeps the hope of it alive in him as a motivation and as a contact with the real world. Unlike the Congolese in Conrad's description, whose 'charm' is purely defensive and propitiating, Magwitch uses *his* 'charm' in an aggressive way. The drive to control his destiny, and if necessary to control that of others in order to do so, is still alive in him. It is part of the amazing sanity of the man. From it comes the strength and energy to do battle, with skilful psychological means, for Pip's acknowledgement of him in the recognition scene.

A further depth is added to the significance of the bible, and 'swearing' in general, when we read of Magwitch "always swearing to his resolutions in his solitude". What he swears to is his determination to make Pip a gentleman, a resolution that gives his life direction and purpose.

"...'Lord strike me dead!' I says each time - and I goes out in the open air to say it under the open heavens - 'but wot, if I gets liberty and money, I'll make that boy a gentleman!' ..." (GE 39, 276)

What a superficial glance interprets as a monstrous travesty of religion, deeper consideration shows to be a genuine religious impulse and practice. Magwitch is giving his life a meaning - finding the meaning that it may have for him. His resolution to raise up Pip is a profound existential founding of his inner and outer life, a founding of his life that comes to govern every aspect of it, and to change his life from worthless to creative. It is significant, moreover, that he makes his resolutions "under the open heavens", which are surely more than just the place from which a thunderbolt might descend. The "open heavens" are the background to Magwitch's solitary life; they are the totality of the background of his being, holding in themselves the great purpose of human life. Magwitch's founding of the direction of his life is religiously determined.

It matters little that we know Magwitch's ambitions for Pip are partly grounded in selfish impulses - there remains that area of his determination that is purely unselfish. In fact, Magwitch questions his conscience on this:

"In every single thing I went for, I went for you. 'Lord strike a blight upon it,' I says, wotever it was I went for, 'if it ain't for him!' It all prospered wonderful." (GE 39, 277)

The method of testing his conscience is naïve enough, but the motive is genuine, if not wholly pure.

Moreover, what drives Magwitch to his resolution is in the last analysis an unselfish love of Pip:

"When I was hired-out shepherd in a solitary hut, not seeing no faces but faces of sheep till I half forgot wot men's and women's faces was like, I see yourn. I drops my knife many a time in that hut when I was a eating my dinner or my supper, and I says, 'Here's the boy again, a looking at me whiles I eats and drinks!'" (GE 39, 276)

Pip has left such a strong impression on Magwitch partly because he was simply a living human thing looking at him with curiosity, partly because he was a child and so not about to prejudge him, partly because Magwitch saw him while he himself was temporarily free. All these conditions indicate certain limited forms of human love. But the *whole* of Magwitch's behaviour to Pip, then and now, seems to show a love that is complete and goes beyond the egotism of its parts: a true Christian charity.

This being the case, it is hard not to detest Pip for the smugness with which he recounts how he gives religious instruction to Magwitch on his death-bed - " ... and it became the first duty of my life to say to him, and read to him, what I knew he ought to hear." (GE 56, 388). The intrusion of conventional religion in Magwitch's case is nothing short of an obscenity, and we cannot clear Dickens of the charge that he is playing to the gallery, to the conventional Victorian religious smugness. Magwitch knows ten times more about the essentials of the religious life than Pip does - and Dickens ought to have seen it.

5.

The reader will be wondering, by now, just what sort of double-dealing I am meting out to him on this question of Magwitch. Didn't I condemn Magwitch earlier, precisely for qualities that prevent him from becoming 'a complete man'? True. I was talking about his impulse to revenge himself on Compeyson, and the ugliness of his resentment against society, and I wrote: "A man harbouring such violent resentments as Magwitch does is not a complete man, not a mature man, not a man who has come to terms with himself." (p.V.44) And here I am trying to prove that Magwitch is 'the complete man' in person!

My answer is that the Magwitch who symbolizes 'the complete man' only constitutes himself gradually in the book. We see his humanness as set off against the background of his original alienation from and deprivation of humanness. Gradually we see how he has built up the world for himself - almost out of nothing. We see him first as someone exercizing only the energies of self-preservation. Then we see how, in a world of almost total alienation and deprivation he clings to - almost recreates - the concept of mastery (and power over one's own destiny) within the world. Through his brief contact with Pip, we see how he is enabled to develop a truly human, existential sense of purpose that directs his whole life. This activity shades off into the religious, and the full human man is there. But we see him as constituted against an almost-void of sheer deprivation, with which he started for us. Humanness can only be portrayed dynamically, as a process of becoming.

With the question of Magwitch's violence and resentment it is similar. Magwitch gradually sloughs these qualities as the book proceeds. He does not fully shed them to the very end - his death is brought about by a final recrudescence of his hatred of Compeyson - but well before this we have evidence of his 'softened' nature and of the quiet, 'philosophical' view of life that it ushers in. I shall not enumerate the stages of Magwitch's softening, merely point to its

causes and try to analyse the kind of spiritual freedom it means to him.

Magwitch's nature softens through the influence of Pip's kindness and also through the very circumstance that in Pip he can gaze on the achievement of his life's purpose. But Magwitch's mellowing is also the work of age and time. Here Dickens touches, with a kind of poetic wisdom , on the forces of nature as forces which may bring a fine character to fulfilment. Something is lost, too. The vitality of the old Magwitch is burnt out. That seems to be the price to be paid for peace of mind. There is even something terrible about Magwitch's resignation at the end, though we feel it only very faintly. For instance, while Magwitch is lying sick in prison, Pip writes of him: "The kind of submission or resignation that he showed, was that of a man who was tired out." (GE 56, 389) Magwitch's exhaustion makes us feel pity, but the pity is outweighed by our sense that Magwitch's resignation is not a passive thing, but an achievement. Nevertheless we must ask: Is it necessary for our vitality, and the drives from which it stems, to be finally broken and burnt out by life before we can achieve peace? Is youth simply a great restlessness? The novel gives no reassuring answer.

Some of the quality of Magwitch's resignation can be seen from the account of him on the boat when Pip and he make their bid to leave England.

> He had his boat-cloak on him, and looked, as I have said, a natural part of the scene. It was remarkable (but perhaps the wretched life he had led accounted for it), that he was the least anxious of any of us. He was not indifferent, for he told me that he hoped to live to see his gentleman one of the best of gentlemen in a foreign country; he was not disposed to be passive or resigned, as I understood it; but he had no notion of meeting danger half way. When it came upon him, he confronted it, but it must come before he troubled himself.
>
> "If you knowed, dear boy," he said to me, "what it is to sit here alonger my dear boy and have my smoke, arter having been day by day betwixt four walls, you'd envy me. But you don't know what it is."
>
> "I think I know the delights of freedom," I answered.
>
> "Ah," said he, shaking his head gravely. "But you don't know it equal to me. You must have been under lock and key, dear boy, to know it equal to me - but I ain't a-going to be low."
>
> It occurred to me as inconsistent, that for any mastering idea, he should have endangered his freedom and even his life. But I reflected that perhaps freedom without danger was too much apart from all the habit of his existence to be to him what it would be to another man. I was not far out, since he said, after smoking a little:-
>
> "You see, dear boy, when I was over yonder, t'other side the world, I was always a-looking to this side; and it come flat to be there, for all I was

a-growing rich. Everybody knowed Magwitch, and Magwitch could come, and Magwitch could go, and nobody's head would be troubled about him. They ain't so easy concerning me here, dear boy - wouldn't be, leastwise, if they knowed where I was."

"If all goes well," said I, "you will be perfectly free and safe again, within a few hours."

"Well," he returned, drawing a long breath, "I hope so."

"And think so?"

He dipped his hand in the water over the boat's gunwale, and said, smiling with that softened air upon him which was not new to me:-

"Ay, I s'pose I think so, dear boy. We'd be puzzled to be more quiet and easy-going than we are at present. But - it's a-flowing so soft and pleasant through the water, p'raps, as makes me think it - I was a-thinking through my smoke just then, that we can no more see to the bottom of the next few hours, than we can see to the bottom of this river what I catches hold of. Nor yet we can't no more hold their tide than I can hold this. And it's run through my fingers and gone, you see!" holding up his dripping hand.

"But for your face, I should think you were a little despondent," said I.

"Not a bit on it, dear boy! It comes of flowing on so quiet, and of that there rippling at the boat's head making a sort of Sunday tune. Maybe I'm a-growing a trifle old besides."

He put his pipe back in his mouth with an undisturbed expression of face, and sat as composed and contented as if we were already out of England. Yet he was as submissive to a word of advice as if he had been in constant terror, for, when we ran ashore to get some bottles of beer into the boat, and he was stepping out, I hinted that I thought he would be safest where he was, and he said, "Do you, dear boy?" and quietly sat down again. (GE 54, 373-4)

Dickens has created a complex scene (with lyrical overtones), the chief purpose of which is to create the inner reality of Magwitch's 'softened air'. The flowing of the river, the rhythms, the relaxed talk (albeit over an abyss of tension); Magwitch's 'smoke', Magwitch's smile, Magwitch's gesture in letting the water flow through his fingers, all contribute to the effect. It is indubitable that Dickens has succeeded in creating the physical atmosphere of a man and a mood - the ageing and softened Magwitch.

I would say that Dickens is less happy in his actual analysis of Magwitch - that there is a touch of uneasiness there, due to his awareness of the paradoxes he observes in Magwitch himself, and due to the improbability of Pip's observing them without puzzlement. One narrative awkwardness strikes me in particular, and that is when Pip describes Magwitch's behaviour in the following words: "he was not disposed to be passive or resigned, as I understood it; but he had no notion of meeting danger half way. When it came upon him, he confronted it, but it must come before he troubled himself." One's immediate response is that Dickens

has made a grammatical error in not at least putting "he confronted it" in the subjunctive- as,"he would confront it". As the sentence stands, it 'means' that the party are constantly meeting dangers that require Magwitch to confront them actively, whereas they are in fact floating peacefully down the river, with actual danger, for the moment, in abeyance. I suggest, however, that this is not a 'mistake', but an expression of where Dickens's real interests lie at this moment. He is obsessed by Magwitch's spiritual state, which he conceives as a group of potentialities - to the exclusion of what actually happens from the point of view of external narrative.

The narrative that is there, of course, does express facets of this group of potentialities which is Magwitch, as we see in the way he is "as submissive to a word of advice as if he had been in constant terror" - and in his way of agreeing to stay in the boat when Pip goes ashore. This brings us to our first problem: that of Magwitch's relation to fear or anxiety. One may first be tempted to say that he is free of these - free of the traditional monsters of fear and hope - but this is too simple.

I have in mind an imaginary Zen master who sits down to a game of chess. This man has no human motives. He has no hope or fear to win or lose. He lacks the aggressiveness that we consider necessary for someone to play a good game of chess. But since he has been presented with the situation, he responds to it with total attentiveness. He regards the game as a problem that he finds in front of him. He can approach it with a certain intellectual freedom. Since all his attention is in the doing, and not in the end, he plays a good game.

Can we explain Magwitch's caution and attention and his temperamental efficiency as a fugitive in these terms? I think that the Zen master is too inhuman an ideal for Dickens. Magwitch conquers fear and hope, but in order to do so does not need to obliterate them. He has his hopes. "He was not indifferent, for he told me that he hoped to live to see his gentleman one of

the best of gentlemen in a foreign country". One might say that his fears have shrunk from the personal realm to his simple anxiety for the fulfilment of this hope. However, this would not be entirely true either. Other passages indicate that the instinct for self-preservation is still alive in him, but as an instinct totally tailored to really existing circumstances. If Magwitch does have the paradoxical peace and alertness of the saint, he remains a saint whose victory takes place within the familiar realm of the human.

Problem number two: to what extent does Dickens now see Magwitch as a man fitting into the community of men - a community of law and order and freedom?

"If you knowed, dear boy," he said to me, "what it is to sit here alonger my dear boy and have my smoke, arter having been day by day betwixt four walls, you'd envy me. But you don't know what it is."
"I think I know the delights of freedom, " I answered.
"Ah," said he, shaking his head gravely. "But you don't know it equal to me. You must have been under lock and key, dear boy, to know it equal to me - but I ain't a-going to be low."

Perhaps we can only understand the writing by assuming that there are contradictions in Dickens's own way of viewing things like the civilization - the 'respectable' civilization - of his era. With the conscious part of him he wholeheartedly condones it in aspects such as its cult of gentleness. For one part of him this civilization of respectability, which implies a knowledge of the complex sensation of freedom (including factors such as the 'Sunday tune' and quiet companionship), is a wholly positive force. But another side of Dickens has created the figure of Magwitch. He may originally have intended Magwitch to supply a limited criticism of his society - a criticism of its imperfections and its injustice. But Dickens must ultimately have come to respect qualities in Magwitch for which respectable Victorian society, whatever its own positive value, had no place at all. So with one half of himself Dickens wishes to see Magwitch tamed: with the other half he weeps over the taming and wishes to preserve in the convict some part of his old untamed self.

It is because of Magwitch's special experience (according to Magwitch himself) that he can enjoy his freedom so intensely. Pip denies this. He claims that the

'delights of freedom' can be enjoyed to the full without this special extra-societal experience to contrast them with. But surely his reply is a little huffy? "'I think I know the delights of freedom'." It sounds as though Magwitch's hints that he has had experiences which Pip can't share have made Pip touchy.

In this context, it is interesting to see what has become of Magwitch's phrase: " 'but I ain't a-going to be low'." From being an appallingly embarrassing deference to Pip's status as a 'fine gentleman' it has become an indication of real tact. Partly Magwitch doesn't want to burden Pip with any of his own resentments, partly he won't allow himself to exhibit that pride which comes so readily to those who have suffered - the kind of pride that persuades a man to believe his sufferings have given him an edge over others. We realize now that both of these motives - motives of genuine tact - had been present in Magwitch's use of the phrase from the start. Just the awkwardness and roughness and embarrassing inappropriateness have been smoothed away. By such means Dickens tones down Magwitch's character and allows it to blend with civilized human usage and with the characters of those now around him.

Dickens might easily have included the following lines as a form of nostalgia on his part and the reader's - nostalgia for the old, reckless and 'exciting' Magwitch:

> It occurred to me as inconsistent, that for any mastering idea, he should have endangered his freedom and even his life. But I reflected that perhaps freedom without danger was too much apart from all the habit of his existence to be to him what it would be to another man. I was not far out, since he said, after smoking a little: -
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> "You see, dear boy, when I was over yonder, t'other side the world, I was always a-looking to this side; and it come flat to be there, for all I was a-growing rich. Everybody knowed Magwitch, and Magwitch could come, and Magwitch could go, and nobody's head would be troubled about him. They ain't so easy concerning me here, dear boy - wouldn't be, leastwise, if they knowed where I was."

Dickens, because he sees all that is needed for the full complexity of Magwitch's character, has inevitably worked himself into a cleft stick. To write about a Magwitch who has the sensations of a citizen at last, and delights in the pleasures of freedom - but who, at the same time, needs the sense of himself as a potentially disruptive outsider - is to create a highly unstable unity of

contradictions. Dickens achieves some success by showing a Magwitch in whom the tensions and needs have been relaxed. The young Magwitch might once have needed danger with a real hunger: he now needs it on the milder grounds of it being a part of "the habit of his existence". In this way the contradictions are acceptable for the moment, though we may still feel some regret for the dangerous and endangered vitality of the young Magwitch, whose life has now been mellowed by time and old age.

But how are we to imagine Magwitch in another country, unpursued once again? Magwitch as we know him must cease to exist. He would become just any man. No wonder Dickens never allows him to get out of the Thames estuary.

Dickens is not prepared to glorify the outsider as a concept through Magwitch. Magwitch's life reaches saintliness *in spite of* his circumstances. Dickens continues to behave as though the existence of Magwitch were merely a fringe criticism of the society that rejects him. But because of what Dickens does imaginatively, we know better. Magwitch's existence is a radical criticism of that society, because of the life-potentiality hidden in his very violence and recklessness. This never comes to full expression. It could only do so if we could see Magwitch as a rebel, and we never do. More about this later.[1]

In one sense Magwitch's life is not a success. The energy and recklessness in him never find out their potentially valuable expression. He never finds a place - without contradictions - as a man among men. The success of Magwitch's life lies finally in his way of letting go of it.

"If all goes well," said I, "you will be perfectly free and safe again, within a few hours."
"Well," he returned, drawing a long breath, "I hope so."
"And think so?"
He dipped his hand in the water over the boat's gunwale, and said, smiling with that softened air upon him which was not new to me:-
"Ay, I s'pose I think so, dear boy. We'd be puzzled to be more quiet and easy-going than we are at present. But - it's a-flowing so soft and pleasant through the water, p'raps, as makes me think it - I was a-thinking through my smoke just

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1. See pp.VIII. 42-44

then, that we can no more see to the bottom of the next few hours, than we can see to the bottom of this river what I catches hold of. Nor yet we can't no more hold their tide than I can hold this. And it's run through my fingers and gone, you see!" holding up his dripping hand.

"But for your face, I should think you were a little despondent," said I.

"Not a bit on it, dear boy! It comes of flowing on so quiet, and of that there rippling at the boat's head making a sort of a Sunday tune. Maybe I'm a-growing a trifle old besides."

Magwitch's gesture exactly states the essence of the man in his present state of soul. It is an active gesture, not at all apathetic, a grasping, which he himself describes as "catching hold of the river". Yet it is relaxed, and as he knows the river will run through his fingers, the action is essentially a gesture of letting go, which Magwitch gently dramatizes, "holding up his dripping hand".

As important is Dickens's ability to recreate the river as a symbol of the mysteriousness of fate, which he does through Magwitch's long speech. Magwitch's rough speech rhythms reach a kind of transcendence. Rhythm and melody give his language a poignant and arresting sense of subtle exaltation, an exaltation of his coarse diction that implies an inner peace and gives him the authority to impose his symbolic interpretation on the river. In this way Dickens makes us accept the symbol and the river is transformed. Its luminosity, its smooth movement, the elusive quality of the element of which it is made up (the running and rippling and dripping water) gain a new mystery and significance. The atmosphere of the whole scene is transcendent in its active and smoothly gliding peace.

Dickens further indicates the importance of the moment to him by introducing into it a touch of that para-psychology which always fascinates him. Magwitch is allowed to have a hunch as to the unfortunate outcome of their attempt to escape, a hunch that is not based on any concrete hint. The thing is done very unobtrusively: nevertheless we feel, in the suggestion of all that Magwitch is keeping to himself, that the premonition is quite an intense sensation to himself.

Of course there is no suggestion of attempting to call off the escape attempt. Another evidence of Magwitch's secular sainthood! For to be a saint, it is necessary in the first place to have miraculous presentiments of the future. But the real test of sainthood is for the visionary then to do absolutely nothing about these presentiments, to take them in his stride, to behave as though they did not exist, acting out of a sheer weddedness to this world, the chances of which are no longer of primary importance to him. Magwitch is in complete unity with his fate, with the unknown - but accepted - course of his life.

Of course Dickens does not exaggerate the stability of Magwitch's serenity - that would diminish our sense of the struggle that has been necessary for Magwitch to achieve his softened gentleness. Magwitch's revengefulness, which is certainly close to murderousness, makes a last bid for his soul when he is confronted once again, and for the last time, by Compeyson. He in fact causes Compeyson's death, though how guilty we are to hold him for this is not clear.

> He told me that he believed himself to have gone under the keel of the steamer, and to have been struck on the head in rising. The injury to his chest (which rendered his breathing extremely painful) he thought he had received against the side of the galley. He added that he did not pretend to say what he might or might not have done to Compeyson, but, that in the moment of his laying his hand on his cloak to identify him, that villain had staggered up and staggered back, and they had both gone overboard together; when the sudden wrenching of him (Magwitch) out of our boat, and the endeavour of his captor to keep him in it, had capsized us. He told me in a whisper that they had gone down, fiercely locked in each other's arms, and that there had been a struggle under water, and that he had disengaged himself, struck out, and swam away.
>
> I never had any reason to doubt the exact truth of what he had told me. The officer who steered the galley gave the same account of their going overboard. (GE 380-1)

This account (as objectively true as Pip can make it) is interesting in particular for the strange detachment that it shows between the Magwitch who survives and the Magwitch of the struggle with Compeyson. Magwitch after the event treats his feelings about Compeyson as something essentially alien invading him. Certainly they are impulses for which he takes responsibility; but he cannot measure his guilt precisely (any more than the author can) because these impulses have now become quite mystifying - a possession of his personality from outside,

in that fashion which represents such a valuable state of mind to human beings, the state of caring intensely while not caring finally.

Only age could give Magwitch this. Age, or sickness. In the last part of the book, the serenity offered by the weakness (among other qualities) of old age is subsumed by the even more paradoxical meaningfulness that can be offered by the weakness of illness, injury, physical decrepitude and approaching death. It is these that Dickens uses to isolate Magwitch from the other people involved in his trial - but they are only what he uses on the surface; in fact he is implying that Magwitch is different from the others in a more profound way:

> Penned in the dock, as I again stood outside it at the corner with his hand in mine, were the two-and-thirty men and women; some defiant, some stricken with terror, some sobbing and weeping, some covering their faces, some staring gloomily about. There had been shrieks from among the women convicts, but they had been stilled, and a hush had succeeded. The sheriffs with their great chains and nosegays, other civic gewgaws and monsters, criers, ushers, a great gallery full of people- a large theatrical audience - looked on, as the two-and-thirty and the Judge were solemnly confronted.
>
> .....
>
> Then, they were all formally doomed, and some of them were supported out, and some of them sauntered out with a haggard look of bravery, and a few nodded to the gallery, and two or three shook hands, and others went out chewing the fragments of herb they had taken from the sweet herbs lying about. He went last of all, because of having to be helped from his chair and to go very slowly; and he held my hand while all the others were removed, and while the audience got up (putting their dresses right, as they might at church or elsewhere) and pointed down at this criminal or at that, and most of all at him and me. (GE 56, 389-91)

It is Q.D. Leavis who points out how little Dickens is concerned with realism in this trial scene. He is using a form of writing close to allegory, and Mrs. Leavis draws a parallel with *The Pilgrim's Progress*:

> The trial and the scene in court are deliberately written of in terms that recall the trial of Faithful with Christian in attendance, and the capital letters with which Dickens sprinkles the pages of chapter LVI show the allegorical intention, that we must identify Pip's society with Bunyan's Vanity Fair, giving the Sessions, the hanging Judge, and the heartless spectators the condemnation that Bunyan gives his. (FRL & QDL 6, 322-3)

But in fact the concept of 'vanity' applies here in a subtler form than in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The courtroom is a true 'Vanity Fair' where it is well-nigh impossible to be one's true self, to recognize one's position for what it is.

Dickens's description of it reveals the world as a place where we live in a distracted way, our self-consciousness (especially when it is most required) invariably either absent or fixed on that aspect of oneself that is most a vanity. This is the meaning of the criminals' posturing. The crowd of spectators is not only a vanity itself - it is so convincingly an 'audience' that it transforms the protagonists into actors. They strut a sham courage or else protect themselves from self-recognition by either brutal insensibility or despair.

Only Magwitch makes an exception. Although we are not actually told so, we feel that Magwitch has the perfect consciousness of himself and of his position, with no need to bluff himself into courage or to protect himself by false indifference.

Strange, the technique that Dickens employs to make us sense this! His 'trick' is to show us Magwitch absorbed by his illness, his injuries, the difficulty he finds in moving. He wraps him in a protective cloak of absorption with himself and the things that have struck him, a cloak which separates him from everybody else. We are aware of Magwitch as passive, suffering, and also as active in the sense of coming to terms with this suffering in every step he takes. The active locks with the passive to form a self-contained whole. And we feel that his awareness of Pip's hand - an awareness of help and companionship - combines, for Magwitch, with the physical suffering and gives it meaning. The man totally absorbed with his difficulty and pain is a metaphor for the man who is totally aware and accepting of his actual situation - an almost impossible rarity.

So Magwitch's procedure from the dock is a triumph - a triumph that exists on a purely spiritual plane, and exists only privately - the 'audience' looks down on him with idle and nothing-seeing curiosity.

The trial scene would be perfect, were it not that Dickens had earlier tried to make Magwitch's triumph overtly glorious:

> Rising for a moment, a distinct speck of face in this way of light, the prisoner said, "My Lord, I have received my sentence of Death from the Almighty, but I bow to yours," and sat down again. (GE 56, 390)

Dickens, too eager to make his point publicly and unmistakably, puts words into Magwitch's mouth that would never be found there. This is not even the worst - the scene is not intended to be realistic - the worst is that Magwitch's words have a histrionic side to them which conflicts most seriously with what Magwitch must be at this moment: the opposite of an actor.

Having registered the clumsiness of Dickens's ploy, we can still ask: What does he mean by it? On the surface it looks like a mere expression of humility and docility dressed in noble speech - is it maybe an attempt on Dickens's part to conciliate the defenders of the society that he has attacked, by advocating and glorifying submission to it? But no: Magwitch's utterance 'places' human justice firmly, even while bowing to it. In one sense at least, the trial is a mockery for him, as he will die soon anyway. Yet there is a desire to understand the judge's sentence in terms of a divine sentence. What is meant by this? An examination carries us to a clearer understanding of how Dickens saw our imaginative collaboration in society's justice and society's institutions.

Let us look at his general descriptions of the court first:

> The whole scene starts out again in the vivid colours of the moment, down to the drops of April rain on the windows of the court, glittering in the rays of April sun. (GE 56, 389)

> The sun was striking in at the great windows of the court, through the glittering drops of rain upon the glass, and it made a broad shaft of light between the two-and-thirty and the Judge, linking both together, and perhaps reminding some among the audience, how both were passing on, with absolute equality, to the greater Judgement that knoweth all things and cannot err. (GE 56, 390)

The sun has already been used as an image of divine grace in *Great Expectations* - one might think of the meaning of its exclusion in the Miss Havisham episodes. It is a rich symbol, drawing many shades of meaning both from its use elsewhere in the book and from our own experience. I want to talk of one specific and limited meaning here. The sun's light is broken by the drops of rain on the glass, and in this way the windows take on some of the aspect of a stained-glass window. They are also "great windows". Consider that, in spite of the

raindrops, more 'sun' comes through the clear glass than through a cathedral window - and we can reproject some of that 'sun' into the cathedral window by giving the cathedral window the sun's shape: circularity. The rain-stippled "great windows" of clear glass are the equivalent of the sun-shaped rose window in a medieval church. And this rose window is traditionally shaped like the sun because it is an image of divine justice.

What is divine justice doing in the court room? Clearly Dickens wants to study its relationship (which may be a relationship of contrast) with human justice. There is some ambiguity about this sunbeam. On the one hand it separates judge and accused; on the other hand it links them together. The meaning is clear. On the level of human justice they are separate, on opposite sides of the fence; on the level of divine justice, they are linked, all of them standing trial. (God is the being that judges without being judged.) Is it logical to say that while divine justice and human justice are separated, they are also linked? The shaft of sunlight, after all, falls into the courtroom like a blessing. It is the blessing, partly, of restitution for all the wrong that is done in that room; it is a reminder to the judges that in judging they must be particularly aware that they are being judged; but it also - surely - adds a gleam of more than human dignity to what passes on the human level?

It is easy to see why Dickens *contrasts* human justice with divine. The judge's speech, singling out Magwitch, shows only too clearly that (a) all prisoners do not pass to his judgement "with absolute equality", (b) that he does not "know all", and (c) that he can err. We, the readers, are those who know more than he does, and as far as this goes both readers and novelist play God, as is right and proper. The judge's lack of divinity is plain enough to *us*.

But in what sense can we say that human and divine justice are linked, so that the one conception supports the conception of the other - as Magwitch's speech before the judge suggests? This amounts to asking the question: Why is

the concept of judgement not only a social necessity, but an imaginative necessity as well?

Here we are in deep waters, and will have to use our sense for necessary ambiguities and necessary distinctions, a sense that is an essential part of reading a writer such as Dickens.

Great Expectations reveals a structure of understanding by which there is seen to be a mutual reflection between three spheres: the psychological, the social, and the religious. This mirror-like correspondence between levels appears to be a system that the nature of our imagination makes necessary to us. Yet such a tendency to shape the levels in accord with each other, or at least to *see* the one reflected in the other, is an urge of the imagination that may work for the worse as well as for the better. If the three tiers of experience could in fact be neatly fitted to each other the situation might be ideal. Each sphere would draw profundity and richness - a further dimension - from the other spheres that corresponded with it. Assuming religious conceptions to be an adequate expression of the divine, the total correspondence of the three spheres would ensure that the human personality and the social institution shared in divine perfection. But this is only too evidently not the case. There *is* a patterning of each sphere on the others, but an imprecise patterning with many radical distortions. Under these circumstances the imagination's yearning to see the three spheres in harmonious accord (sometimes to the point of interchangeability) is a diabolic one, frequently giving birth to the malformed, the abortive and the grotesque, and creating its own forms of madness and delusion among men.

All this discussion only takes on substance when one examines particular instances. Let us take, as our instance, the courtroom 'audience'. This 'audience' has a long history in the book; it is the last in a series of reincarnations reaching back to the Christmas revelry of Pip's seniors, an orgy of Pip-baiting that is only diverted by what turns out to be its climax: the hunting-down of the convicts on the marshes. We have here the psychological

impulse to bully, to dominate, to hunt. We also have the scape-goating that is an essential concomitant of the villagers' self-righteous smugness.

The whole thing has been analysed rather well by Sartre in his study on Genet: *Saint Genet, Comédien et Martyr.* He writes of the 'homme de Bien', who in his conception of good and evil denies the latter solidity as a part of his being. He confesses to being invaded by impulses of evil, but these are external to himself; the good belongs to him. And if he is the good, then the evil of the world needs explanation. Since this 'homme de Bien' is also well off and respected - where else would he derive his view of himself? - his impulse is to find his opposite in the socially displaced, persecuted and unprivile ged. It is clear that such a psychology (which corresponds to that of the 'respectable' in Dickens's world) needs the unprivile ged and needs to call him a criminal. The 'audience' at the trial has gathered to witness the ritualization of its psychological impulses.

On the other hand, the criminal trial receives a resplendence from being regarded, consciously or unconsciously, as a ritualization of divine process. Worldly justice seems to gain a resplendence from its divine counterpart - at least it is one of the fundamental tendencies of the human spirit to permit it to do so. Fetishism or idolatry, this tendency to enrich the worldly institution with the glory of its divine counterpart is still in need of a thoroughgoing analysis. It is one of the most disturbing impulses, after all, in the human psychic armoury, and may be a prime factor in human enslavement. On the other hand it may play a role of enriching the human world with splendour and significance.

I have never found a critic of Velasquez who discusses both of what strike me as the two most significant elements in his paintings. These paintings often seem to take authority itself as their theme. But there is a strange contradiction between the faces of these all-too-human authority-figures and their clothes. The faces show men and children realistically and individually, frequently as unworthy and incapable within their roles, and sometimes as suffering from them.

Yet there is no irony in the presentation of the role. In the painting of the clothes, the stance of the figures, and the light which informs the picture, authority is portrayed as partaking of the divine. The light in particular has an otherworldly quality which brings these pictures into line with the tradition of Spanish mysticism. It is almost impossible to respond to both aspects of the picture at once. Either the character-analysis threatens to debunk the glory, or the glory annihilates the character-analysis by absorbing it. Either way, we are not seeing the whole painting. For how could the painting leave out one aspect without being untrue to its subject? Shall we deprive ourselves of our opportunity to glimpse the face of the divine in our feeling about human authority? Where shall we find wisdom and revelation if not in the world? And on the other hand, shall we surrender our critical faculty entirely, dazzled by the splendour of the divine concept, so that we see neither corruption nor inadequacy nor weakness, and are held in awe by our own idolatry? It is a theme that returns - without any dazzle or romanticism - as one of the main problems in the writings of Kafka. For him, too, the world presents an ambiguous face as corrupt and yet embodying the divine. And, in the development of a novelistic form by which this dilemma might be given expression, Kafka was almost certainly helped by Dickens.

Dickens tackles the problem most comprehensively in *Bleak House*. There, Miss Flite is the supreme fetishist and idolatress. She sees the Chancery court as the very lawcourt of God. This court is working under the 'sixth seal' on the last clearing-up arrangements before its final triumph when all will be revealed, the prisoners of life (such as her own birds) will be freed, and men will see even as they are seen. Miss Flite is, of course, mad. And her sickness serves to indicate some of the more subtle ways in which the Chancery court imprisons its victims through the imagination. There is no more horrifying imaginative trap to fall into than that which may lead one to believe that Chancery embodies the actual condition of life, and must therefore be served whole-heartedly. Yet

on another level, Dickens *does* use the Chancery court as a symbol for the total condition of life. In its accumulation of impedimenta to clear vision, to direct human relationships, to final truth, it is like the world as a whole, wrapped up in too much jeweller's cotton, stifled with accretions of mud, confused, so that people move towards each other as if groping through fog. But what of Miss Flite's hope that one day the problems will be solved, and the trial of Jarndyce and Jarndyce be resolved in light? Surely this works, through vast deserts of irony, as a promise to the reader? A promise that light exists somewhere, that there is some truth at the bottom of the well? It is a mistake to feel that Miss Flite's delusions are to be rejected by the reader as simply false. Miss Flite's way of thinking allows a valuable religious insight, a faith in the ultimate clarity of things, to enter into the novel - provided one allows oneself to see her and her situation as a form of parable. She is not only in the novel to make a satirical point. Why else should she be so lovable - and, in a strange sense, inspiring? The kind of truth that Miss Flite expresses is a truth that novelists can only express ironically. For by the extreme mis-application of her faith the extreme difficulty of a 'correct' faith is represented, while at the same time, through her, the floating and perverse possibility of faith is adumbrated, as if it could be visible only in the minds of idiots and children.

Are we any closer to understanding why Magwitch says, "My Lord, I have received my sentence of Death from the Almighty, but I bow to yours"? The important point is that Magwitch is not 'doing a Miss Flite'. He is not identifying the judge's imperfect human sentence with the divine sentence of God as a general principle, but in this particular case and only insofar as it applies to his own particular spiritual situation and his understanding of his destiny. His action is not a judgement made on any external truth, but a commitment whereby he founds his own personal truth. We are back to the problem of why institutionalized justice should be not only a social necessity, but also an imaginative one - and why it should sometimes be necessary to the imagination to accept an unideal justice as an ideal one.

Let us consider the problem of one's own reality as it poses itself for a spirit such as Kafka's. To escape a sense of utter meaninglessness, Kafka had to assure himself that his being was grounded in an absolute and reciprocating reality that was worthy of it. Being Jewish, Kafka could not escape the knowledge that his *human* problematic was different from the problematic of any other creature. Hence this reality that he sought to be assured of must be, not his physical reality, or his reality as an animal, but his reality as human. Once again, Kafka's definition of his humanness derives from the Judaic tradition: a man is that being who lives in a world of action that comprises good and evil. Having tried to live according to this so dignified conception of oneself, how would it ever be possible to settle for less? Indeed, to know that one lived in a world of real good and real evil would be an incomparable assurance (however terrible in other ways that world might appear). But is it given to us to know real good and evil, good and evil as absolutes? What do our good and evil amount to beyond the reflexes of our super-ego, the prejudices of our neighbours, a few coarse commandments, and our own self-deceptions? Is there any way of penetrating to the final Law that will define our guilt or innocence at any moment? Does God or this existence we are trapped in have no way of making us certain that we live in a world of absolute good or evil? Are we to be given no sign?

We *are* given a sign, and this is the sign: that we are judged. Many of Kafka's stories deal with the terrible breaking-in of this world of absolute justice on its unsuspecting victim. The only thing worse than such an occurrence is a complete loss of touch with such a world of absolutes, a refusal to live with final human seriousness. Kafka's novel *The Trial* deals with a man who may be described as having been given an opportunity to take true stock of his life, though this opportunity is presented in a terrifying form. The man is arrested for an unspecified crime by a mysterious court. The man claims that he is innocent, and in essence never moves from this position. This is in fact to disclaim his deeper humanity. Because he has been accused of no particular crime,

his plea of innocence is a total denial of guilt. But seeing he is human, he cannot but be guilty in the absolute sense. In fact his claim of innocence is a refusal to allow the court to force him to review his life on the deepest level. It is an attempt to keep his life superficial and meaningless.

It should be mentioned at this point that the court itself is obviously corrupt, cruel, and stifled in bureaucracy. This corresponds to Kafka's sense that absolute justice can only manifest itself indirectly in this world, in a twisted, distorted, corrupt form. Nevertheless, it is only through these distorted evidences, which make up our life, that we can come into contact with the world of Law in which our being is founded. The man in *The Trial* refuses to acknowledge that he may be judged, refuses to acknowledge that the court has any relevance to his life (though he cannot be unaffected by it); he lives meaninglessly and dies miserably. " 'Wie ein Hund!' sagte er, es war, als sollte die Scham ihn Überleben." (FK 10, 165) (" 'Like a dog!' he said: it was as if he meant the shame of it to outlive him." - FKT 10, 251)

Magwitch's utterance in court must be taken as part of an effort to make sense of his life. He is not in a position to have any superior overall view of society. He is only presented with its vicious logic in the form of the vicious logic of his life, as the man in Kafka's book is presented with his trial - as something to accept, or to make a total rebellion against, but not simply to deny. Magwitch's acceptance of his sentence is in essence an acceptance of the vicious logic of his life in toto. He must make the hard acceptance of his total life as unredeemable, unalterable, unalienable, his own. Those who deal in if-onlys are a different species.

And so we come to understand a passage that Dickens evidently regarded as central:

> I sometimes derived an impression, from his manner or from a whispered word or two which escaped him, that he pondered over the question whether he might have been a better man under better circumstances. But he never justified himself by a hint tending that way, or tried to bend the past out of its eternal shape. (GE 56, 389)

Yet the 'if-only', and even the 'might-have-been', are a real dimension of life; they form an alternative to the inert facts of the past and of circumstance and so may form the basis of a man's future choices and lead to action. Even Magwitch speculates to some extent on the 'might-have-been', though Dickens carefully restricts this speculation to free fantasy unassimilated to action; he keeps Magwitch's speculations within the realm of free play - they do not lead to an impulse to change the world. Dickens is taking care to guard against Magwitch's falling into the illusion that his soul can be seen (except in play) as totally apart from the circumstances against which it has been formed; nevertheless there is a sense in which the soul may transcend its circumstances (and precisely through consciousness of the realm of the 'if-only' and the 'might-have-been') - this is when the soul makes a new evaluation of itself through new action, rejecting the existing circumstances by struggling to change them. Magwitch makes the choice (and this, too, is a choice) of accepting and affirming the circumstances and so essentially accepting the world's evaluation of himself. In other words, Magwitch chooses not to be a rebel.

It remains to be considered why Dickens chose to make this central figure a saint of active resignation rather than a saint of rebellion. The question works on two levels, and thus requires two answers. We can answer, first of all, that, because Dickens created Magwitch as the man he is in the novel, any attempt on his part to adopt the rebel's stance will lead to failure, to a perversion of rebellion itself. This I see as due to a lack in him, a lack of understanding - ultimately an intellectual failure. However, if we can establish this, a new question arises: we still have to ask why Dickens - who in a certain sense had the power to make Magwitch what he pleased - should have found it necessary to limit him in this way; why so rich and suggestive a character

could not have been given the intellectual understanding that would allow him to act out the posture of revolt in a creative way. For there can be no doubt that Dickens admired the impulse of rebellion immensely, and considered it one of the great releasers of human energy and creativity.

The first part of my argument - that Magwitch, as created, could not have made a satisfactory rebel - can be better understood if we examine a passage from Camus' *The Rebel*, where Camus deals with the distinction between rebellion and resentment:

> It would be possible for us to define the positive aspect of the values implicit in every act of rebellion by comparing them to a completely negative conception like that of resentment as defined by Scheler. Actually, rebellion is more than an act of revenge, in the strongest sense of the word. Resentment is very well defined by Scheler as an auto-intoxication - the evil secretion, in a sealed vessel, of prolonged impotence. Rebellion, on the other hand, removes the seal and allows the whole being to come into play. It liberates stagnant waters and turns them into a raging torrent. Scheler himself emphasizes the passive aspect of resentment, and remarks on the prominent position it occupies in the psychology of women whose main preoccupations are desire and possession. The mainspring of revolt, on the other hand, is the principle of superabundant activity and energy. Scheler is also right in saying that resentment is always highly flavoured with envy. But we envy what we do not possess while the rebel defends what he has. He does not only claim some benefit which he does not possess or of which he was deprived. His aim is to claim recognition for something which he has and which has already been recognized by him, in almost every case, as more important than anything of which he could be envious. Rebellion is not realistic. According to Scheler, resentment always turns into either unscrupulous ambition or bitterness, depending on whether it flourishes in a weak mind or a strong one. But in both cases it is always a question of wanting to be something other than what one is. Resentment is always resentment against oneself. The rebel, on the other hand, from his very first step, refuses to allow anyone to touch what he is. He is fighting for the integrity of one part of his being. At first he does not try to conquer, but simply to impose. (AC 23)

It is clear that Magwitch's motives in making Pip a gentleman, insofar as they are a response to his society, mark him as suffering from resentment as defined by Scheler. His desire to "[own] a brought-up London gentleman" (GE 39, 278) is a case of "wanting to be something other than what one is". Magwitch himself recognizes the uncleanness of his feelings (though he does not apply this recognition to the praxis that arises out of them) when he shows that he has the sense of having been 'low'. And perhaps it is partly because Pip recognizes that Magwitch's actions are the expression of such feelings that he determines, for himself, not

to accept Magwitch's money (even though it has been honestly earned, and so is 'clean' money as far as that goes). The truth is that Magwitch has been so mystified by the values of his society that he can maintain no real sense of his own value vis-à-vis that society. And as Camus points out the sense of one's own value and the readiness to assert it are the fundamental qualities of the true rebel.

Magwitch does, it is true, attain to a clear sense of his own value when he is in a position to assert it vis-à-vis Pip. When Magwitch burns the pound notes, that is a true act of rebellion, the assertion of his own value and independence as against Pip's patronage. I said at this point that Magwitch's act expresses an inner authority and a conviction of that authority. It is the authority of the outsider, the man living in the shadow area of his society's ideological lights, who can thus look on with greater scepticism and see, from his point of view, more clearly. It is not the same as (but is related to) the authority of the worker who, unlike the gentleman, must struggle for his existence.

It is obvious why Magwitch can assert his value and so his authority against Pip, yet not against society's evaluations. He is Pip's benefactor; he has *made* Pip and can see Pip's apparent superiority from the point of view of a secure scepticism. But society has *made him* and this must obscure his own sense of his independence and reality, his authority as a living and acting being with a point of view. It would require an intellectual leap for him to transform his resentment of social domination into a creative self-assertion, into rebellion - this despite the evident contempt that accompanies his envy.

The Magwitch that Dickens has created is incapable of this leap - and we certainly have nothing to complain of on the score of realism. However, bearing in mind Dickens's recognition of the value of rebellion as exhibited in a host of minor characters throughout the novels; bearing in mind also that *Great Expectations* is an attack on a social system, and that Magwitch is the main instrument of that attack - why didn't Dickens make Magwitch such that he might

go a little further with him? If Magwitch can, at certain moments, recognize the value and authority of his own experience when measuring himself against Pip, why is he not given the understanding to see that he can question the social structure from a position of moral strength? Had Dickens allowed Magwitch to assert the authority of a rebel it would have been felt immediately - and not merely negatively, either - how social oppression crushes the best energies of mankind; for Magwitch would give us an instance of those energies ranging themselves against the social system. As it is, Dickens chooses to show us how these energies can be maintained, by a certain discipline, in spite of oppression (though at the price of mystification and a certain degree of self-perversion - a self-perversion which works itself out towards the end of Magwitch's career). Dickens, then, solves the problem of how Magwitch is to come to terms with his fate without forcing himself to consider the alternative (with *its* problems) of fruitful self-assertion in opposition.

It is, then, a choice of problems that lies behind Dickens's choice of a solution for Magwitch. And I would say that Dickens chose not to do more with Magwitch (for to show him as capable of a critique of his society would be to do more) because of an ultimately negative judgement on revolution. It is no use saying that revolution would not concern Dickens as the conditions for it did not exist in Victorian England. The bourgeois would have imagined revolution as a possibility then as always, if only as a reflection of his own bad conscience. And of course Dickens's studies of the French revolution in *A Tale of Two Cities* and the Gordon riots in *Barnaby Rudge* show his involvement with the fantasy, though it was a strangely unbalanced involvement. Dickens was after all not only a bourgeois, but a bourgeois with proletarian experience, both through his own past and through his involvement with the poor. This meant a real imaginative co-operation on his part in the scenes of revolt, particularly the storming of prisons. Too much of Dickens was in sympathy with revolution for him to remain neutral. And he chose to set his face against it altogether.

In fact, one might say that it was because the conflict of Dickens's emotions on this theme was so threatening to him that he never allowed himself to deal with the real historical issues of revolution. Hence *A Tale of Two Cities* shows the French revolution in terms of gratuitous aristocratic cruelty and the Terror. Dickens focuses on the irrational, thus depriving history of any rationale except that of individual or mob passion and pathology. The aspect of the book that promises initially to deal seriously and cathartically with history and revolution, the theme of hidden, forgotten, imprisoned realities being brought into the light, is later swamped in the sensationalism of bloodshed and gratuitous carnage. The choice of the Gordon riots for theme in *Barnaby Rudge* is also characteristic, as a rebellion of greater confusion could hardly be found - manipulation, duplicity and betrayal making the motives of the rioters near impossible to divine - so that the violence could easily be depicted as senseless. (This is not to deny the power and interest of the rebellion insofar as it makes up part of Dickens's analysis of patriarchal, toryish authority in *Barnaby Rudge*; it is merely to say that Dickens uses history to make a limited point - and so trivializes it.)

Dickens's inability or unwillingness to see the lower classes as a historical force can be seen in another choice, though here the limitations of his experience may have been the deciding factor. In dealing with the poor, Dickens characteristically deals with the London poor - and his key figure is the vagrant or the pauper - rather than with the worker in the industrial towns of the North[1]. From reading Dickens one would have the impression that England was haunted by a throng of homeless outcasts; but not that a functioning part of society was being exploited. The property of the vagrant and the outcast is that he has no social

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1. The one apparent exception, the novel *Hard Times*, is no exception at all: Stephen Blackpool is only nominally a proletarian, he is in fact a man from an earlier age; and the book as a whole, whatever its other qualities and interests, is a final betrayal of the worker's right to defend himself.

rights; only the religious right of being there and requiring compassion. Whenever Dickens's protest against poverty approaches any generalized strength or explicitness, he chooses to see social relations in terms of Christian compassion and dignified submission, rather than in terms of positive justice and rebellion. Revolution is inconceivable to him as a rational way of altering society; the threat of the mob which suffering and numbers have turned irrational is used by him as a bugbear (on the same level of reality as nightmare) to terrorize the rich into compassion.

To what extent does Dickens's bourgeois fear of revolution poison less related aspects of his view of life? This cannot be answered, but we do find a conflict of imaginative fascination and fear that is similar to his response to mob violence in his attitude to passionate sexuality, particularly in women. Mademoiselle Hortense, Rosa Dartle, Miss Wade. Mademoiselle Hortense is French, walks barefoot through the grass as if she were walking through blood, and is a murderess. We meet Miss Wade in Marseilles, and Mr. Meagles goes on in the same chapter about the "allonging and marshonging" of the French (LD I, 2, 28). The connection is peculiarly insistent. Dickens had a need to create women who were passionate in a totally unconventional way, but he could only create them as tigresses, and somewhere in the background hovered the French revolution, Madame Defarge and all. Dickens was drawn to something that he had to reject and slander out of fear. An absolute fear of revolution is a fear, in the end, of human potentialities.

. . . . . .

If Dickens did not create a rebel in Magwitch, and if this meant that the novel's tone of revolt fizzles out into submission, he nevertheless created something wholly remarkable, that casts its light on Pip's search for a personal solution. Pip says of Magwitch:

I sometimes derived an impression, from his manner or from a whispered word or two which escaped him, that he pondered over the question whether he might have been a better man under better circumstances. But he never justified himself by a hint tending that way, or tried to bend the past out of its eternal shape. (GE 56, 389)

To reject the 'if-only' and the 'might-have-been' so resolutely in the process of forming a sense of oneself is to assert a quite unusually absolute bond with the actual of past and present. Magwitch toys with alternative lives; if he did not, he would not be human. But his refusal to let fantasy-alternatives distort the actual gives him a density normally unknown to man. This discipline which Magwitch applies to his thought while drawing his life together on his deathbed accords with the rest of our sense of Magwitch - our sense of him as a man cleaving with all his faculties to the fabric of life - and it allows his commitment to take a new form as a preparation for death. Perhaps the maximum Pip can learn from Magwitch is the rejection of his illusions - his 'poor dreams' - a recognition that every imaginative commitment he has made in his life has been a betrayal of the actual and must be jettisoned or become intolerable.

CHAPTER NINE

THE RESOLUTION AND EXPURGATION OF THE MAGWITCH THEME

Pip comes to terms with his Magwitch experience

1.

I have spent time on Magwitch because I wanted to stress the richness of the phenomenon which Pip is accepting in accepting Magwitch. It is not merely that Magwitch represents a way of living with actuality that contrasts painfully with Pip's existence; the idea of Magwitch offers the reader the idea of a fulfilled and completed life, a limited and satisfactory human ideal. Dickens shows the reader that it is necessary for Pip to accept Magwitch in order to escape the torment of the past. It is a disappointment to the reader that Pip, having learnt to accept Magwitch, absorbs so little of his wisdom and strength. But the truth is that Magwitch is himself the greater part of that tormenting past which Pip needs to shift from his shoulders. In the critical thirty-ninth chapter, Pip cries out:

> Nothing was needed but this; the wretched man, after loading wretched me with his gold and silver chains for years, had risked his life to come to me, and I held it there in my keeping! If I had loved him instead of abhorring him; if I had been attracted to him by the strongest admiration and affection, instead of shrinking from him with the strongest repugnance; it could have been no worse. On the contrary, it would have been better, for his preservation would then have naturally and tenderly addressed my heart. (GE 39, 279)

Already at this stage, Pip has a premonitory intuition that he can only be freed from bondage to Magwitch - the psychological bondage of guilt and repulsion - by learning to love him. It is only when Pip comes to regard Magwitch as in truth a father that, with the fulfilment of Magwitch's own ambition (to have Pip as "more than a son"), Pip can watch him die in prison without the particular uneasiness that might come from guilt or an imperfect sympathy.

> "Dear Magwitch, I must tell you, now at last. You understand what I say?"
> A gentle pressure on my hand.
> "You had a child once, whom you loved and lost."
> A stronger pressure on my hand.

"She lived and found powerful friends. She is living now. She is a lady and very beautiful. And I love her!"

With a last faint effort, which would have been powerless but for my yielding to it and assisting it, he raised my hand to his lips. Then he gently let it sink upon his breast again, with his own hands lying on it. The placid look at the white ceiling came back, and passed away, and his head dropped quietly on his breast. (GE 56, 392)

Dickens seems to indicate that the final completeness of Pip's acceptance of Magwitch could perhaps never have been reached had Pip not known that Estella was his daughter. We are evidently in the presence, here, of some powerful (if puzzling) Victorian piety. Because Magwitch is the father of the woman whom Pip loves, he becomes himself a person to whom those feelings are owed that would be due to a real father - however unreal, in terms of lived experience, the particular father-daughter bond may be. It is really very strange. For the link between Estella and Magwitch - whatever the *facts* - can never be more in real terms than an idea, and an idea for Pip alone. Yet it is this mere idea which finally liberates his affection for Magwitch from its last shackles - either because it connects Magwitch with his life's love or because it makes his potential love and regard for him a duty. Pip can now overcome any remainder of repulsion he may feel and whole-heartedly pursue his feelings of affection. Magwitch's preservation - it is now a spiritual preservation -"naturally and tenderly" addresses his heart.

Thus the discovery of Estella's parentage is an intensely significant moment in Pip's spiritual voyage - which explains the intensity (apparently gratuitous at the time) of the following passage:

I should have been chary of discussing my guardian too freely even with her; but I should have gone on with the subject so far as to describe the dinner in Gerrard Street, if we had not then come into a sudden glare of gas. It seemed, while it lasted, to be all alight and alive with that inexplicable feeling I had had before; and when we were out of it, I was as much dazed for a few moments as if I had been in Lightning. (GE 33, 235)

The "inexplicable feeling" Pip refers to is that which he experiences when, some pages back, he sees Estella's "face at the coach window and her hand waving to /him/" (GE 32, 230). Of this he writes, "What *was* the nameless shadow which

again in that one instant had passed?" (GE 32, 230). The content of Pip's moment of illumination in the gaslight is his subliminal recognition of the likeness between Estella and Jaggers's housekeeper, perhaps even of their relationship.

The conscious recognition of the relationship comes much later, when Pip sees the housekeeper just after there has been talk about Estella and her marriage.

> He dismissed her, and she glided out of the room. But she remained before me, as plainly as if she were still there. I looked at those hands, I looked at those eyes, I looked at that flowing hair; and I compared them with other hands, other eyes, other hair, that I knew of, and with what those might be after twenty years of a brutal husband and a stormy life. I looked again at those hands and eyes of the housekeeper,and thought of the inexplicable feeling that had come over me when I last walked - not alone - in the ruined garden, and through the deserted brewery. I thought how the same feeling had come back when I saw a face looking at me, and a hand waving to me, from a stage-coach window; and how it had come back again and had flashed about me like Lightning, when I had passed in a carriage - not alone - through a sudden glare of light in a dark street. I thought how one link of association had helped that identification in the theatre, and how such a link, wanting before, had been riveted for me now, when I had passed by a chance swift from Estella's name to the fingers with their knitting action, and the attentive eyes. And I felt absolutely certain that this woman was Estella's mother. (GE 48, 334)

From the discovery of the mother Pip is able to derive the father.

So the intensity of the passage where Pip and Estella pass through the flare of the gas-lights can be seen as due to this: that it is a moment which contains in itself, unrealized, the insight that will lead to Pip's discovery of the relationship between Estella and Magwitch. This discovery is important partly because it is the final stage in Pip's liberation, partly because of the depth and solemnity of the commitment which Pip feels his discovery demands of him, and the relationship this kind of commitment or piety bears to the civilization's profoundest ideals.

The discovery is also important with regard to other aspects of the book's structure. It is the 'detective-story element', the 'mystery' (almost obligatory in a Dickens novel) the solution of which is a symbolic revelation of the nature of the universe.[1] The extreme poles of the social order are united; mankind is

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1. Cf. Edmund Wilson's comments in his essay called *Dickens: The Two Scrooges:* "In *Bleak House*, the masterpiece of this middle period, Dickens discovers a new use of plot, which makes possible a tighter organization ... He creates the detective story which is also a social fable. ... But in the meantime it is one of Dickens'

(Contd. on IX.4)

'flowing hair' - but the way, after she has left the room, she remains for Pip to look at, and look at again ... Her appearance has impressed itself on him so powerfully that her ghost seems to remain in the room with him. What is more, Pip's mental vision of Estella at this moment also detaches *her* image from her present existence in time. He does not think of her as she is now, but as he has never seen her - as she "might be after twenty years of a brutal husband and a stormy life" (they have just been talking about her marriage to Bentley Drummle). She is present to him as a ghost from the future. And Dickens does not use such effects gratuitously. They accompany a surge into the consciousness of unconscious impressions of exceptional fineness from the past, so surpassing ordinary mental activity that they imitate second sight, rising from so deep a level of the personality that they are closely involved in what Dickens (much like De Quincey) conceives as fate.

Pip's vision of Estella as she "might be after twenty years of a brutal marriage and a stormy life" is of the order of the vision that a young husband might have of 'his wife as she will be when she is old.' Such a vision cannot be formed from observation and deduction - only from the finer intuitions that follow on an unconscious gathering of impressions. Such intuitions are normally trapped in a realm beyond the reach of the consciousness.

Dickens allows his readers to undergo an experience similar to Pip's: the experience of gathering evidence subliminally, and without knowing what it means, till the moment of revelation revives it all. It is the eyes (attentive), the hands, and (to a lesser extent) the hair that form the bridge between Estella and her mother. And we realize later that Dickens has again and again drawn our attention to Estella's eyes (attentive) and her hands. But we cannot possibly isolate these impressions at the time. We are usually aware of *both* Estella and Miss Havisham through their hands and attentive eyes. Things are made more complicated by the fact that there *is* a resemblance between Estella and Miss Havisham, which Dickens draws our attention to:

In some of her looks and gestures there was that tinge of resemblance to Miss Havisham which may often be noticed to have been acquired by children from grown up persons with whom they have been much associated and secluded, and which, when childhood is past, will produce a remarkable occasional likeness of expression between faces that are otherwise quite different. (GE 29, 208-9)

Dickens's is an art of indirection. The impressions remain subliminal till the moment of the coup by which Dickens unites mother and daughter, when they spring to life in some fashion, though not distinctly remembered.

Even the detail that gives the whole show away is not presented without some ambiguity and indirection before it is resolved. The final revelatory link is that of fingers going through the actions of knitting. Here is the clue coming from Estella:

In the room where the dressing-table stood, and where the wax candles burned on the wall, I found Miss Havisham and Estella; Miss Havisham seated on a settee near the fire, and Estella on a cushion at her feet. Estella was knitting, and Miss Havisham was looking on. They both raised their eyes as I went in, and both saw an alteration in me. I derived that from the look they interchanged.

"And what wind," said Miss Havisham, "blows you here, Pip?"

Though she looked steadily at me, I saw that she was rather confused. Estella, pausing for a moment in her knitting with her eyes upon me, and then going on, I fancied that I read in the action of her fingers, as plainly as if she had told me in the dumb alphabet, that she perceived I had discovered my real benefactor. (GE 44, 307)

There is no reason why Pip should be arrested by Estella's knitting fingers. Yet this opening of a chapter immediately places us in a world of cryptic signs: "I fancied I read in the action of her fingers, as plainly as if she had told me in the dumb alphabet, that she perceived I had discovered my real benefactor." The movement of Estella's fingers had a perceptible meaning, a meaning that Dickens offers to us. But it is only later (in a passage about Mr. Jaggers's housekeeper) that we realize how the moving fingers are to have another, and more important, meaning for Pip.

She was at his elbow when he addressed her, putting a dish upon the table. As she withdrew her hands from it, she fell back a step or two, nervously muttering some excuse. And a certain action of her fingers as she spoke arrested my attention.

"What's the matter?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"Nothing. Only the subject we were speaking of," said I, "was rather painful to me."

The action of her fingers was like the action of knitting. (GE 48, 334)

Estella is actually knitting; her mother only going through similar movements out of nervousness. Pip's mind has to jump, and in the leap of this spark lies all Dickens's sense of mystery.

I called the uncovering of Estella's parentage a 'detective-story element'. So it is, but finally the detective-story is a spiritual one: not a hunt among facts in the world, but a hunt among forgotten images in the mind, a search in which the seeker is not even conscious of his purpose, yet seems guided by an invisible hand. The whole thread of the discovery is like an image for the way some compulsion in the imagination seeks out a pattern of experience for the protagonist in De Quincey and Dickens, and shapes his destiny from within.

2.

The discovery of Estella's parentage is only the crowning stage of Pip's reconciliation with Magwitch, and so of his liberation. Pip's liberation is a journey of many stages, among which his conclusion of the Miss Havisham affair forms one of the most important. One way of regarding the two last visits to Miss Havisham's house would be as tests that Pip has to undergo on his path to maturity. Nor are they the only tests. And some of the tests are mysterious, mystifying. What are we to make of the night Pip spends in the Hummums (Chapter 45), after receiving the note from Wemmick that reads: "DON'T GO HOME"?

It is easy to see the superficial usefulness of *some* such episode to Dickens. It gives him a chance to get Pip out of the way while Magwitch is moved to Mill Pond Bank. Another change will have taken place (or will for the first time make itself apparent) when Pip sees Magwitch again: Magwitch will be softened, and Pip's feelings towards him will have softened too. Dickens makes use of Pip's

absence for a night to make a transition all in one sweep that might be tedious if presented in easy stages.

But for this purpose no more was needed than the bare stratagem of Wemmick's note to get Pip out of the way. However Dickens develops the incident till it becomes a spiritual tribulation for Pip, a new test for him to endure. This can be seen in Dickens's treatment of the message itself. There need be nothing cryptic in the words "DON'T GO HOME", but when Pip, lying sleepless in the Hummums, keeps repeating them in his mind they become a mantra - a mantra, moreover, that is hostile to his spirit and that produces an anxiety which turns out to be unnecessary in practical terms.

> Even when I thought of Estella, and how we had parted that day for ever, and when I recalled all the circumstances of our parting, and all her looks and tones, and the action of her fingers while she knitted - even then I was pursuing, here and there and everywhere, the caution Don't go home. (GE 45, 314)

The pursuit of "the caution Don't go home" seems an askesis that is laid on Pip not only literally but symbolically, as a mental discipline, as well. Pip's visit to Miss Havisham, which precedes the receipt of the note, ended with his declaration of love for Estella, an "ecstasy of unhappiness" (GE 44, 312), a "rapture" (GE 44, 312)from which Pip found it difficult to "come to [himself]" (GE 44, 313). Now the receipt of the note seems to make self-recovery even more impossible: Pip must stay out in the cold - he is forbidden to return to his own centre of strength and security, prevented from retiring back on his own resources. It is as though Pip had to be punished for his "rhapsody", for the necessary orgy of self-indulgence in which he exhausts the burden of his love for Estella. To put this another way: the egotism of his outburst needs to be counterpoised by an extreme alienation from ego.

The Hummums is a place of exile. And Dickens takes care to describe the place. A bed is to be got there at any time of the night, a detail which gives the place some of the eternal availability of hell - seems to free it, at any rate, from its mere physical presence, and to make it a place that exists in the

mind. Then comes the description of Pip's room:

> It was a sort of vault, on the ground floor at the back, with a despotic monster of á four-post bedstead in it, straddling over the whole place, putting one of his arbitrary legs into the fireplace, and another into the doorway, and squeezing the wretched little washing-stand in quite a Divinely Righteous manner. (GE 45, 313)

The gigantic bed is a 'grown-up' bed as seen by a child. It is a parental bed, a bed from which the child is excluded, symbolizing the power and arbitrary exclusiveness of the adult world. Pip has indeed come home, but to a home that is not home, to a child's sense of being excluded. The whole feeling of the book's opening chapters - the misery of Pip's isolation - returns on us. In fact the bed's "Divinely Righteous manner" of "squeezing the wretched little washing-stand" takes us back irresistibly to Mrs. Joe.

But it is also significant that we are dealing with a collection of *things* in a room, not of persons. The bed's wooden leg is "arbitrary" and the light-spots on the wall, that stare at Pip like a foolish Argus (GE 45, 314), have the stupid wakefulness of things that are totally dead. Dickens continues:

> There was an inhospitable smell in the room of cold soot and hot dust; and, as I looked into the corners of the tester over my head, I thought what a number of bluebottle flies from the butchers', and earwigs from the market, and grubs from the country, must be holding on up there, lying by for the next summer. (GE 45, 314)

There is a sense here of the arbitrary persistence of the concrete world - it reminds one of the awful absentmindedness which keeps overcoming Fagin during his trial:

> Thus, even while he trembled, and turned burning hot at the idea of speedy death, he fell to counting the iron spikes before him, and wondering how the head of one had been broken off, and whether they would mend it, or leave it as it was. (OT 52, 402)

When we hear Pip enumerating the different kinds of insects that may be waiting out the winter in his vault-like room, when we hear him wondering as to their number, and when we combine this with the absurdly proportioned combination of objects in the room, we have the sense of entering a familiar (if always estranging) place in Dickens's sensibility. One might give it the name of "The Pawnbroker's Shop" or "The Inventory of Assorted Oddments", the "*Gruppenbild* of meaningless

nebeneinander". Any reader of Dickens will recall such instances of the surrealist juxtaposition of inert and forgotten objects: Mr. Venus's shop in *Our Mutual Friend* is an excellent example. I wish to argue that these passages express one of the ways in which Dickens imagines Death.

It seems to me that in *Great Expectations* we find several separable symbolic systems that refer to death - each giving death a very different significance. When Pip is accosted by Magwitch in the first chapter the symbolism carries suggestions of death, so that we experience Pip's horror of Magwitch as being flavoured by an atavistic horror of death. Death here appears as seen through the young man's physical-instinctual horror of it; the imagery by which it makes itself known is a symbolic projection of the kind of fears expressed by Claudio in *Measure for Measure:*

> To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
> This sensible warm motion to become
> A kneaded clod ... (MforM III, i, 119-21)

Thus in the Magwitch episode Death the bogeyman appears as a body that is mutilated, truncated, or partly turned into a thing and become predominantly mechanical; it exhibits a sinister rigidity. And Dickens integrates this symbolism into his social critique by using it to link death with servitude and captivity.

Later on - in the next chapter - I shall be talking at length about a symbolization of death that is totally different. This is the land of death - an after-life - a death-landscape where the hero re-encounters his past, no longer as a succession of moments, but as a plenitude of all those impressions that his substance has been able to absorb as being suited to it. This is 'time re-discovered' in the Proustian sense; it is a return into the subconscious fund of one's profoundest memories, those impressions which have been gathered in the mind according to a commitment that is not imposed by the external world, but by the individual identity working out its imaginative destiny in a kind of isolation.

But if we become aware at moments that we possess a subconscious fund of impressions that concern us profoundly (if sometimes inexplicably), it is also true

that at other moments we rather have a sense that our mind is crammed with totally meaningless images that seem to exist there only by having fallen into our field of vision by accident. This area of our mind - which is a waste-heap of all the imagination has rejected - has *its* inexorability, too - related to the inexorable, stubborn existence of a world of things outside us and independent of our concern. If the other region of the mind was a paradise like the paradise of childhood recalled, this new region of halls or caves filled with heavy and pointless furniture is the hell that is its antithesis.[1]

It is this latter world of death - hell rather than paradise - that has fascinated the modern writers: Beckett, Sartre, and Susan Sontag. In Susan Sontag's *Death Kit* Diddy, the hero, ends by walking through a series of rooms connected to a railway tunnel. These rooms contain mottoes and graffiti, unrelated objects, coffins, corpses, clothes and uniforms. As he proceeds, she writes:

> Diddy is reconnoitring the future. Diddy is exploring his death. Cautiously, thoughtfully, diligently. He wills to know, he will know all the rooms in this place; even if it's the house of death. (SS 306-7)

Later, the comment on what Diddy sees is: "Death = an encyclopedia of life" (SS 314). The book ends:

> More rooms. Diddy walks on, looking for his death. Diddy has made his final chart; drawn up his last map. Diddy has perceived the inventory of the world. (SS 315)

Susan Sontag does not distinguish a paradise within the mind from these subterranean caverns, so similar to the hell of Pip's "vault-like" room. If anything, what is paradisal is absorbed in the hell of objects, which is why Diddy finds the rooms mildly interesting rather than appalling.

In *Great Expectations* I have the sense that there is a polarization: that the Hummums are the opposite of Pip's inner life - of his love for Estella, for instance. His sojourn there represents - as a step towards freeing himself of his obsessions - a movement away from his inner self towards the world.

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1. It is clear, I hope, that I see the Hummums as belonging to this third region of death.

3.

What value might a life have which is stripped of its obsessions? My own sense is that Pip's life, as the book describes it, becomes finally tolerable at the price of a painful emptiness, even a sense that he has lost his soul (despite his partial recovery of the world of Joe and Biddy). Dickens obviously intends us to take Pip's final solution as a good one in spite of its humility; for him Pip, at the end of the book, has at last gained maturity, not least in the modesty of his expectations. But often I have the feeling that Dickens's heart is not in it; I for one cannot free myself from a sense of loss. One must ask the question again: What value might a life have which is stripped of its obsessions? I am not unduly impressed by Pip's reconciliation with the household at the forge - Pip's failure to marry Biddy is a clear indication that he has lost the key to that aspect of his past, that he can never be more than a prosaic friend to the new Gargerys. We must rather seek a passage in which Dickens sees Pip's newly-won maturity as a liberation in positive terms (as against a mere exhaustion of what has driven him before). And through most of the book's conclusion I don't find much sense of Pip's new-found emotional freedom as something either inspiring or invigorating. But there is an exception to this in the suggestions of a very brief passage: the beginning of Chapter 46 hints at the positive life that Dickens might have seen as arising from Pip's 'cure'.

Pip has just gone through the experience of the Hummums, which represent the unhomeliness of the world of objects to which our receptivity is chained: Pip has experienced 'the unfriendliness of the world'. In a sense this has helped purge him of the Estella-intoxication. And so he responds now with freshness to a world that is sober and yet sensuous, particular; external without being alien; suggestive of free movement, redolent of purposeful activity.

Eight o'clock had struck before I got into the air that was scented, not disagreeably, by the chips and shavings of the longshore boat-builders, and mast, oar, and blockmakers. All that water-side region of the upper and lower Pool below Bridge, was unknown ground to me, and when I struck down by the river, I found that the spot I wanted was not where I had supposed it to be, and was anything but easy to find. It was called Mill Pond Bank, Chinks's Basin; and I had no other guide to Chinks's Basin than the Old Green Copper Rope-Walk.

It matters not what stranded ships repairing in dry docks I lost myself among, what old hulls of ships in course of being knocked to pieces, what ooze and slime and other dregs of tide, what yards of ship-builders and ship-breakers, what rusty anchors blindly biting into the ground though for years off duty, what mountainous country of accumulated casks and timber, how many rope-walks that were not the Old Green Copper. After several times falling short of my destination and as often over-shooting it, I came unexpectedly round a corner, upon Mill Pond Bank. It was a fresh kind of place, all circumstances considered, where the wind from the river had room to turn itself round; and there were two or three trees in it, and there was the stump of a ruined windmill, and there was the Old Green Copper Rope-Walk - whose long and narrow vista I could trace in the moonlight, along a series of wooden frames set in the ground, that looked like superannuated haymaking-rakes which had grown old and lost most of their teeth. (GE 46, 320)

One of the factors that makes the freshness of this passage so convincing is that this freshness seems unstrained-for on Dickens's part, and unsought-after on Pip's. Pip even sounds grudging in saying that the air is "not disagreeably" scented. This seems some guarantee that the experience is genuine, encountered as it were from a source outside the will. And throughout the passage Pip is in the position of discovering the new, encountering territory that rings no fateful bells in his subconscious, that does not throw him back on his past. The passage is totally devoid of melancholy.

It is significant that the sense impression that the passage opens with is one of smell. There is very little about smell in *Great Expectations*. The impressions that rule Pip's spiritual life are predominantly visual and aural ones. A sense impression of smell falls out of their continuum. In this Dickens seems to turn Proust on his head. For Proust it is precisely the impressions of taste or smell that by virtue of their unanalyzable specificity may, by suddenly recurring, reawaken forgotten images, thus revealing the deeper levels of the spiritual life. Dickens, by stressing the unanalyzable specificity of a scent(though the cause of this scent may in fact be a mixture) seems to be stressing the 'outside' nature of a smell, and suggesting that it cannot be

produced or reproduced in the mind, that it exists only as a concrete novelty to be encountered and placed in an 'outside' world, a world that is to be acted on freely rather than ingested and made part of an imaginative adventure.

Something similar might be said of all the detail in the passage. It has great separateness, individuality, specificity. A sense of things existing in their particularity is conjured up, aided by the frequent use of proper names that are sufficiently idiosyncratic to draw attention to themselves and to seem unrepeatable, unique.

This quality of particularity is perhaps aided by our knowledge that Pip is engaged in a search. This transforms the longshore waste into a map, which means that everything in it has a particular place. But this place is not static. Space appears to expand and contract around Pip as he questions it, in response to the vicissitudes of his project: to find the Old Green Copper Rope-Walk. In fact one might say that space in this passage takes on an almost 'athletic' quality. There is first of all the continuing image of the rope-walk - a spatial image suggesting skilled physical action. Also, freedom of movement in space is suggested by phrases and words like "struck down by the river", "falling short", "overshooting". Finally we have a place "where the wind from the river had room to turn itself round".

This is as much as to say that here we have a sense of Pip living in his body in a way that he has never done before - an active body, sensuously sentient, actively aware of itself in relationship to space, and interacting with the world.

The sense of riverside activity that is produced (although this is a night scene) is also important. This is true in spite of the many references to decay, ruin and destruction which are there together with the references to construction. The kind of clean energy that can go into the "old hulls of ships in course of being knocked to pieces" even suggests a joy in the destruction of the past and outmoded that may have its counterpart in what we feel Pip to be doing with himself.

Most significantly of all - here is a riverside scene, and we might be tempted to recall the description of the hulk, its chains, the stakes and mud of the shore - yet here such combinations have ceased to be demonic for Pip. The world has lost its psychic thunder for him, and is now revealing itself as being a concrete world, no more than what it is. Pip's search is a trip of discovery into a demystified environment. Later, in the trip down the river, we get a dramatization of the process of demystification, as the scenes of Pip's early traumatization slip by, as it were in reverse order, like the unreeling of a spooled-up thread.

A similar purgation from terror is demonstrated in the treatment, when Pip reaches his destination, of Bill Barley, "Old Barley", "old Gruffandgrim", "that truculent Ogre" who draws attention to himself by making "a bumping noise ... above, as if a giant with a wooden leg were trying to bore it through the ceiling to come at us" (GE 46, 321-3). Violence, a major theme of the novel and a large factor in Pip's problem, has become comic.

4.

But Bill Barley is not Pip's last encounter with violence. He still has to meet it in its most irreducible form, in Orlick, who acts as a personification of the violent principle. Pip seems to overcome the power of his nightmare, insofar as it threatens him through its content of violence, by defeating Orlick at the lime-kiln. But for this victory he needs to face the violence and hatred *in himself*; acknowledge it, defend it, justify it. He must also show himself to be prepared to *act* out of violence.

associated with the brooding temper of the lime-kiln: "The lime was burning with a sluggish stifling smell ..." (GE 53, 361). And soon this vapour becomes a corroding and corrupting force:

> Waiting for some reply, I looked about me, noticing how the sluice was abandoned and broken, and how the house - of wood with a tiled roof - would not be proof against the weather much longer, if it were so even now; and how the mud and ooze were coated with lime, and how the choking vapour of the kiln crept in a ghostly way towards me. (GE 53, 361)

Orlick's resentful brutishness affects Pip not as a deplorable side of human nature which can be abstractly conceived of and rationally considered but as a threat: it poisons his world. It is Orlick who defines the relationship between the two of them when he says: "Oh, you enemy, you enemy!" (GE 53, 362) He can make this definition of fundamental antagonism, and can gloat over it. Pip has not yet come that far. Only as the scene progresses does he come to admit his hatred.

Orlick understands the situation in terms of privilege and discrimination: "You were favoured, and he was bullied and beat" (GE 53, 364). He heaps accusations against Pip. Pip cost him his place with Miss Havisham. He gave him a bad name with Biddy. He threatened to drive him out of the country. *He* was responsible for the attack on Mrs. Joe; for his being favoured was what infuriated Orlick. Despite the irrationality of many of Orlick's claims, we become aware of how he has come to see Pip's treatment of him. To him this treatment looks like persecution, a persecution that raises all the issues of class. Orlick's original class-resentment is a resentment of what is out of Pip's control: that Pip is the forge owner's relative and probable successor. But then there is also the much more justifiable resentment of Pip's self-congratulatory boast that he will spend any money to drive him out of the country, a rich-man's boast that - even for us - recalls the social persecution that exiles Magwitch. Dickens drives the conflict to a point where there is no right or wrong in argument any more; where reality resides only in a natural detestation of Orlick's brutish, violent, self-pitying resentfulness. Perhaps the fact that Orlick eventually escapes into the dark is indication of some

consciousness on Dickens's part that Orlick's case is not yet closed, that his argument still remains unassuaged.

But for Pip, the only sense of reality and proportion lies in his holding on to his hatred of Orlick - thereby finding his own identity or reality. Pip's aggression towards Orlick in this scene is quite beyond anything one might expect from someone so gentle and timid. The fact that he is now in a position of powerlessness gives his aggression against him an authenticity it did not have before, when as a rich man he could brush him aside.

> Softened as my thoughts of all the rest of men were, in that dire extremity; humbly beseeching pardon, as I did, of Heaven; melted at heart, as I was, by the thought that I had taken no farewell, and never now could take farewell, of those who were dear to me, or could explain myself to them, or ask for their compassion on my miserable errors; still, if I could have killed him, even in dying, I would have done it. (GE 53, 364)

Pip also says:

> Above all things, I resolved that I would not entreat him, and that I would die making some last poor resistance to him. (GE 53, 364)

Pip in fact makes more than a "poor resistance" - his resistance, however hopeless, seems to unleash new powers of life in him:

> The resolution I had made did not desert me, for, without uttering one vain word of appeal to him, I shouted out with all my might, and struggled with all my might. It was only my head and my legs that I could move, but to that extent I struggled with all the force, until then unknown, that was within me. (GE 53, 367)

And it is only because of this resistance that Pip is saved. He passes out and - note well! - on coming to the first face he sees is Trabb's boy's, a circumstance which delights the reader as nothing else could. We do not know why, but there is no other face that would be as welcome to us at that moment.

Why? It is one of those Dickensian strokes of genius that seem, at first, inexplicable. Trabb's boy belongs to the type of the Dickensian street-arab. Sam Weller already has some distinguishing marks of the species. The tribe appears in numbers milling around Bucket and Snagsby when they visit Tom-All-Alone's in *Bleak House*. The junior prigs of *Oliver Twist* are another obvious example. Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop* has a boy who infuriates him by standing on his head. In fact Quilp and the other dwarf-figures, or cripple-figures, with their

justified resentment of normalized society, their spiteful aggression, and their manic energy, are close to the tribe of these horrible and hope-inspiring boys. Trabb's boy is characterized among them by his unmystified sense of how the world of power and wealth and self-importance galls him, and by his imaginative mockery of it. Perhaps the most extreme of the tribe is the boy Deputy in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* - who is employed by the old and mouldy Durdles (who lives for the town's ancient tombs) to stone him home when drunk. This is youthful energy attacking the oppressiveness of old age in a way never dreamed of even by Shakespeare when he wrote *King Lear*. It is pure anarchy, energy in revolt against the restraint with which the approaching adult world threatens it. These diminutive packages of violence, standing on their heads, pulling faces, jeering and chanting jingles, are embodiments of the Freudian id. It is right that on his first real expenditure of aggression, his first real draft on the energies that are unleashed in the struggle for self-preservation, Pip should meet Trabb's boy's face, as the comic emodiment of anarchic aggression.

I here draw close to the position taken up by Robert Garis in his interpretation of *Great Expectations* - Chapter 10 in *The Dickens Theatre*. Garis claims that beneath the official meaning of *Great Expectations* lies a deeper level of signification, on which level Dickens discusses the problem of the expression of libido in his society. According to Garis, Dickens shows that the only real possibility of free expression of libido in his society lies in violence and aggression.

> Blood and violence produce power and satisfaction and are in fact in this story the only means towards fruition. (RG 211)

But these are frustrated precisely by the best and most admirable ideals of this society. Pip, by reneging blood and violence, reneges power and satisfaction. Garis also says that through the incident with Orlick, who is "the only person in the novel towards whom Pip feels hatred ('violent indignation') and the only person whom Pip deliberately decides to fight" (RG 213), "a kind of purgation is effected" (RG 214).

Now I think it is evident that Dickens was quite conscious and explicit about the role of violence as a theme of the novel, and moreover that Dickens rejects almost any form of violence in most parts of the book. Yet in discussing the Orlick episode Garis is right. Dickens's artistic intuition for when a *profound* self-correction was required by an imbalance in the book is evident here, in this episode. It is tacitly admitted that there are situations where hatred, aggression, violence are salutary and necessary, that they liberate hidden energies in the personality, and that this may help to set the personality on its feet.

The Orlick incident is thus not only an episode of melodrama, but a stage in Pip's self-recuperation that Dickens rightly saw was essential.

5.

How is it possible for the novelist to show the process by which traumatic or obsessive material in the mind is transformed as the mind comes to master it or to assimilate it into the personality as a whole? He might show this process by a change in action and behaviour, indicating indirectly by these that things have changed in the soul of the protagonist. But this indirectness has its limitations: it would be nice if one could enter the protagonist's mind and actually watch the movement of the furniture, the shifting of the scenery, that is going on there. The psycho-analysts of the twentieth century discovered (as, in a sense, De Quincey had discovered before them) that dreams could offer privile ged access of this kind. In particular the dream sequence, with its repetition of imagery in new forms (the elaboration or simplification of otherwise stubborn material), was a record of the psyche's work on its problems, a record of the actual transformation of the mind's furniture. Certain sections of Carl Jung's

book *Psychology and Alchemy* could be read as a novel, though a novel dealing purely with the mind. It would be a novel that depicted a spiritual adventure - what Jung calls the individuation process - entirely through dreams, visions, and hallucinations.

I have been arguing that in *Great Expectations* we find something similar: one of the ways in which Pip's story is being told is through a varied repetition of certain image-clusters - imagery that haunts his life because it has come to have a special significance for him; Pip's mental development is reflected in the way these image-clusters develop in content, arrangement, mood. Plainer examples will offer themselves soon, when we analyze the journey downriver; but for the moment let us examine whether the Orlick episode, which I have claimed represents a clear stage in Pip's self-liberation, is accompanied by any changes in his mental furniture; whether the high degree of mental activity brought about by the crisis can be seen in terms of rapid work done by Pip on the images he has retained of his own life. It is the proximity of death that causes images to rush through his mind:

> It was not only that I could have summed up years and years and years while he said a dozen words, but that what he did say presented pictures to me, and not mere words. In the excited and exalted state of my brain, I could not think of a place without seeing it, or of persons without seeing them. It is impossible to overstate the vividness of these images ... (GE 53, 365)

This recalls a passge from De Quincey's *Suspiria de Profundis* which I had already quoted in my chapter on De Quincey (see p.II.7). It is a passage describing the mental state of a woman who comes near to drowning. Here it is again:

> At a certain stage in this descent [into the abyss of death], a blow seemed to strike her, phosphoric radiance sprang forth from her eyeballs; and immediately a mighty theatre expanded within her brain. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, every act, every design of her past life, lived again, arraying themselves not as a succession but as parts of a coexistence. (SdeP 511)

Pip's mental images are chiefly inspired by Orlick's words, yet we also get the sense of his mind sweeping back over the ground that it has covered (forwards) in the course of his life, revivifying everything for the last time simply because it has been:

Mill Pond Bank, and Chinks's Basin, and the Old Green Copper Rope-Walk, all so clear and plain! Provis in his rooms, the signal whose use was over, pretty Clara, the good motherly woman, old Bill Barley on his back, all drifting by, as on the swift stream of my life fast running out to sea! (GE 53, 365-6)

And again:

He flared the candle at me again, smoking my face and hair, and for an instant blinding me, and turned his powerful back as he replaced the light on the table. I had thought a prayer, and had been with Joe and Biddy and Herbert, before he turned towards me again. (GE 53, 366)

All this is intensified and complicated by Pip's anxiety as to the reputation he will leave among those he knows and enumerates, once he has been murdered at a secret assignation, and his body annihilated in the lime-pit.

My mind, with inconceivable rapidity, followed out all the consequences of such a death. Estella's father would believe I had deserted him, would be taken, would die accusing me; even Herbert would doubt me, when he compared the letter I had left for him, with the fact that I had called at Miss Havisham's gate for only a moment; Joe and Biddy would never know how sorry I had been that night, none would ever know what I had suffered, how true I had meant to be, what an agony I had passed through. The death close before me was terrible, but far more terrible than death was the dread of being misremembered after death. And so quick were my thoughts, that I saw myself despised by unborn generations - Estella's children, and their children - while the wretch's words were yet on his lips. (GE 53, 363-4)

The fact that Pip's memory will be falsified by his death casts a shadow of meaninglessness over the images that pass through his mind, insofar as they might be said to make up his *own* life. All the other figures have meaningful, sensible lives for him: when he says their names they arise for him as people who have made some meaning of their existence. But because the contrary will be denied to him - to live in *their* minds as someone whose life has been a coherent and consistent project - the images from his life that rush through him cannot group themselves meaningfully; they characterize his life as unfinished, absurd.

For this reason it would be wrong to make too much of Pip's orgasmic rush through his past on the point of death as a recuperation of his life, or as a liberation from its haunting of him. Nevertheless, the mere recurrence of an image, seen under the auspices of that great detachment granted by imminent death, must surely offer a greater control over the past, particularly when it appears in

circumstances of such exceptional mental activity and energy. An image refound by the consciousness is an image brought under greater control - both more securely possessed and set more at a distance, so as to make freedom from its domination more possible.

Pip is struggling to free himself from his life - that becomes more and more plain. This entails completing its meaning in a way satisfactory to himself. The episode with Orlick threatens to leave his life (inner as well as outer) unfinished, because his death at this point will prevent him from the one liberating action that remains to him: the living through of his obligation to Magwitch, the completion of the Magwitch strand in their escape together down the river.

6.

In speaking of *Great Expectations*, one is sometimes tempted to carry on like a Lévi-Straussian structuralist. In the first part of the book, Pip moves upstream - from the marshes to London; in the attempted flight with Magwitch, he retraces this path. On this second journey, reversing the first, images from Pip's childhood, from his first encounter with Magwitch, recur in new forms. The effect is of an unreeling of all that has been wound on the spool of Pip's mind by his dealings with the convict. This is perhaps an overschematisation: let us examine the evidence.

Pip wakes up on the Wednesday morning on which he and Magwitch are to attempt their escape with a sense of recovery, recovery from his burning at Miss Havisham's and his rough treatment at the hands of Orlick:

Wednesday morning was dawning when I looked out of window. The winking lights upon the bridges were already pale, the coming sun was like a marsh of fire on the horizon. The river, still dark and mysterious, was spanned by bridges that were turning coldly gray, with here and there at top a warm touch from the burning in the sky. As I looked along the clustered roofs, with church towers and spires shooting into the unusually clear air, the sun rose up, and a veil seemed to be drawn from the river, and millions of sparkles burst out upon its waters. From me too, a veil seemed to be drawn, and I felt strong and well. (GE 53, 370)

It would be going too far, perhaps, to find in the mention of the lights on the bridges a reference to the night of Magwitch's return, a mental reference now become manageable as the lights pale with the dawn. The lights could after all be just what Pip sees from his window. But there can be no doubt about the "marsh of fire on the horizon". Marsh, horizon, fire in the sky - these are all elements of the early passages. And the bridges are "coldly grey" - the colour we now long associate with Magwitch. The verticals breaking the horizontals, also a feature of the early landscapes, though emphatically sparse in them, are here supplied by the church towers and spires.

The transformation of the image-cluster can be seen most clearly in what has happened to the "marsh of fire" - once a symbol of threatening doom, now an image of dawning hope. This is the inner alchemy that makes possible the lifting of the veil on the river and in Pip. Finally we have the millions of sparkles bursting out on the water, the light-effect that characterizes the last section of the book - see the court-scene - and that represents a new calm and life-readiness in Pip[1].

It is to be noted that once Dickens sets this process going, by which the reader is warned that the reappearance of the down-river imagery represents a liberation from the nightmarish force of childhood imagery, the later references to the past are not so explicitly touched by this kind of soul-cleansing transformation. This would have entailed an unartistic overexplicitness - and besides, Dickens has

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1. Even though this particular effect seems to have grown from effects in the earlier passages that were violent, reckless, and frightening: the torches flung hissing into the water when Magwitch is taken on board the prison-ship (GE 5, 46); the burning coals carried off on the wind from the barges on the river just before Magwitch's return (GE 39, 271).

by then other fish to fry.

As a matter of fact we must wait quite a long time before we come to the next of those image-clusters which point back to Pip's childhood. Five pages after the last quoted passage we come to this:

> It was like my own marsh country, flat and monotonous, and with a dim horizon; while the winding river turned and turned, and the great floating buoys upon it turned and turned, and everything else seemed stranded and still. For, now, the last of the fleet of ships was round the last low point we had headed; and the last green barge, straw-laden, with a brown sail, had followed; and some ballast-lighters, shaped like a child's first rude imitation of a boat, lay low in the mud; and a little squat shoal-lighthouse on open piles, stood crippled in the mud on stilts and crutches; and slimy stakes stuck out of the mud, and red landmarks and tidemarks stuck out of the mud, and an old landing-stage and an old roofless building slipped into the mud, and all about us was stagnation and mud. (GE 54, 375)

It is undeniable that this passage bears a resemblance to the cluster of marsh- and riverside—landscapes at the beginning of the book - and particularly to the scene of Magwitch's return to the hulks. Again there is the emphasis on horizontality; and the exceptions to this - the "great floating buoys" - are perhaps a transformed memory of the beacon in the first chapter ("like an unhooped cask upon a pole" - GE 1, 18). The ballast-lighters, "shaped like a child's first rude imitation of a boat", are like a distorted memory of the hulk that had struck Pip as being "like a wicked Noah's ark" (GE 5, 46); and certainly the shoal-lighthouse that "[stands] crippled in the mud on stilts and crutches" is reminiscent of the prison-ship which was "cribbed and barred and moored by massive rusty chains", and seemed "in [Pip's] young eyes to be ironed like the prisoners" (GE 5, 46). The mud and stakes repeat the scene of Magwitch's transportation.

It might be protested that such similarities may not be calculated, at least not for the purpose I have outlined. It is true that one could hardly expect the lower reaches of a river *not* to look like the lower reaches of a river. Yet the correspondences in the imagery are too precise for us to doubt that Dickens's imagination, in making this description, was specifically directed by a sense of *Pip* returning to the landscapes - external or internal - of his early

life, and in particular those of his early difficulties and traumas. What might well be questioned is the assertion that Dickens intended this recurrence of imagery as both cause and evidence of a purgation. The present passage, for instance, lacks the clear hints of a psychic renewal that characterized the previous passage. Perhaps Dickens originally intended to make the trip downstream a mirror of Pip's inner liberation, but then did not carry his intention through to the end, having become more interested in the relationship between Pip and Magwitch? This seems to me to be the correct conclusion on the whole. Yet even so, these re-encounters with the past have some meaning as marking stages in the dénouement of Pip's inner drama.

What is the emotional tinge of the present passage? Dominant in it is the isolation of the turning and turning river in a silent and stagnant world. I would maintain that here the landscape is presented in the guise of a landscape that is dying out of being, as its power dies out in Pip's mind; the band of the river, still turning and turning, represents the residue of a now morbid and weary drift in Pip's life, a drift to which he is still captive only in a marginal way.

The last reference to the scenes that had once burnt themselves into Pip's mind comes almost immediately after the one I have just quoted: here the recession of flat planes returns, finally - and also, finally, the fatal mixture of red and black in the sky:

> By that time the river had lifted us a little, so that we could see above the bank. There was the red sun, on the low level of the shore, in a purple haze, fast deepening into black; and there was the solitary flat marsh; and far away there were the rising grounds, between which and us there seemed to be no life, save here and there in the foreground a melancholy gull. (GE 54, 375)

The old imagery indeed returns - but isolated in a distant world; the dominant feeling is one of sublime detachment.

7.

The use of sickness and fever as a stage in Pip's mental cure - as a kind of agent of psychological rebirth - needs little comment, as it is a well-tried novelistic device reaching back to the sentimental novel of the eighteenth century. It may be of interest, however, to look at the content of Pip's fever-dreams:

> That I had a fever and was avoided, that I suffered greatly, that I often lost my reason, that the time seemed interminable, that I confounded impossible existences with my own identity; that I was a brick in the house-wall, and yet entreating to be released from the giddy place where the builders had set me; that I was a steel beam of a vast engine, clashing and whirling over a gulf, and yet that I implored in my own person to have the engine stopped, and my part in it hammered off; that I passed through these phases of disease, I know of my own remembrance, and did in some sort know at the time. (GE 57, 394)

Pip's dreams are of being trapped as a powerless unit in a greater, elaborate structure which he has not chosen. In a sense his wish to escape is a death-wish, a desire to pry himself free from the elaborate network of life. In this sense the dreams represent the drama of the sickness - his struggle, within it, between life and death.

But in another way the dreams dramatize Pip's sense up to now of being caught up in a story that has used him as a pawn - at a great cost to his sense of his own autonomy. That time is past now; we can say that Pip has to all intents and purposes freed himself and is cured; the dreams are a memory, the last traces that his struggle and sense of struggle have left on his mind. We can now go on to consider how much Pip has lost by his cure; and in what way Dickens conceives of the man who is left over when the most interesting part of his story - the part that constitutes the novel - is done.

CHAPTER TEN

RESIDUES

The two endings

1.

We have seen how Pip relives the earlier trauma of his meeting with Magwitch and, by reliving it, brings the memory under control. When Magwitch reappears Pip is initially reduced to a sense of childish helplessness that recalls the scene on the marshes; but gradually, through practical action and a new attitude toward Magwitch, he brings the situation under control, both practically and psychologically. The memory of Magwitch will no longer be a stain that starts out in his life and infects his mind. That demon has been exorcized. The question we find ourselves asking *now* is the same that has been asked - and asked so frequently by artists - concerning the psycho-analysed patient: Has the exorcism of his demons not exorcized his angels as well?

We recognize that the recurrence of Pip's experience presents him with a problem of understanding - and the problem is primarily that of understanding Magwitch's humanity; might not this understanding in itself supply a powerfully held and emotionally rich foundation for a future life? In theory, at least, we can imagine that the terrifying experience which Pip is presented with at the beginning of the book might be purified of terror in its recurrence for the adult, and might reveal itself as having been rich in positive gifts, rich in proportion with its initial horror. Something of this sort must have taken place in Dickens himself, in his mature reworking of the experiences in his past that *he* had felt as shameful - the experiences belonging to the time in the blacking factory. Only it is not so with Pip. Dickens makes it clear that in practice it

is very difficult for an ordinary man (a man without the outlet of literary expression) to turn his fear, guilt, bewilderment and shame into a positive foundation for his life - at any rate where the fear and guilt and shame have bitten as deep as in Pip's case, and have been so long repressed. Pip never makes the attempt. He learns to understand Magwitch - but only in order to exorcize him. We sense as paramount in him the desire to free himself - to free himself of this story that is not of his making, in which he has acted a part without comprehending it. Because Satis House and its inhabitants are also a part of the obsessions and the illusion, inseparable from the convict-demon, they too must be relinquished, if only for his own psychic health. Thus the two central romantic experiences of his childhood, the two centres of his emotional life, have been driven out by Pip. What is there left, around which his imagination might still cling?

Has Pip's imagination died with the death of Magwitch and the marriage of Estella? Whether Dickens was actually aware of it or not, this is one of the questions Dickens was obliged to give an answer to when he contemplated an ending for the book. I have already shown, in analyzing the passage in which Pip searches for Mill Pond Bank (pp.IX.12-14), how Dickens hints at a kind of mental freedom that liberates the senses and allows the imagination to exist in a kind of freshness, a freshness that has been relieved of all stifling obsessions. But there is nothing in the last chapters of the book which recalls this passage to us. Pip is indeed relieved of what was obsessive in his imaginative life, but no such flowering as the passage promised takes place in his existence. The business of Pip's life, as he himself describes it in the last chapters, seems undeniably drab and unimaginative. So that the Mill Pond Bank passage must have represented an exploration of possibilities that Dickens does not in the end see as capable of being realized.

As it happens, *Great Expectations* presents us with a good index of Pip's relationship to his imaginative self, and this is his inner relationship to

Estella. Estella can actually be said to *stand for* Pip's imagination. On parting from her in Chapter 44 he says to her: "You are part of my existence, part of myself. You have been in every line I have ever read, since I first came here, the rough common boy whose poor heart you wounded even then. You have been in every prospect I have ever seen since - on the river, on the sails of the ships, on the marshes, in the clouds, in the light, in the darkness, in the wind, in the woods, in the sea, in the streets. You have been the embodiment of every grateful fancy that my mind has ever become acquainted with. The stones of which the strongest London buildings are made, are not more real, or more possible to be displaced by your hands, than your presence and influence have been to me, there and everywhere, and will be." (GE 44, 312) Pip has invested his imagination in Estella so fully, that she inevitably becomes the best symbol for it. Perhaps it is because of this extra dimension of meaning invested in Estella- and not merely for sentimental reasons - that Bulwer-Lytton found the original ending of the book unacceptable, and felt that Dickens's readers would find it unacceptable too. A Pip without an Estella would be a mere shadow of himself. By settling Pip's ultimate relationship to Estella, Dickens would also be settling the question of how much of Pip's imaginative life had survived. As we know, he settled it in two different ways in the two versions of the ending - if the final version can be said to settle it at all.

The original version seems designed merely to finalize - once and for all - Pip's renunciation of Estella. Estella is married; Pip allows her to think that he, too, is married, and that 'little Pip' is his son. That Pip does not even attempt to explain the circumstances (as one would to a friend) shows that not even friendship is envisaged. The two are anyway separated by the fact that Estella is in a carriage, Pip on foot. As for little Pip, he serves to underline the lack of any complete emotional attachments in Pip's life: his unmarried status and the fact that in Joe's and Biddy's home he is no more than an honorary member of the family. The recognition of the change in Estella brought about by her

suffering adds to the sense of finality: Pip can now forget about her with a good conscience.

This is, I think, the realistic ending to the novel. Dickens knew very well that a marriage between Pip and Estella (however reformed) was impossible. In fact Pip's love had never been of a kind that could form the basis of a good marriage - and Estella had already shown herself intelligent enough to see this. Yet the final version of the ending clearly indicates that Pip and Estella will never part again - that they will become man and wife. Dickens the entertainer could manage the situation superbly. But are we to believe that Dickens the realist was writing without qualms? I suspect one may find traces of a bad conscience - expressing itself unconsciously in the way Dickens keeps the last few lines at least superficially vague:

> "Be as considerate and good to me as you were, and tell me we are friends."
>
> "We are friends," said I, rising and bending over her, as she rose from the bench.
>
> "And will continue friends apart," said Estella.
>
> I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw no shadow of another parting from her. (GE 59, 412)

Instead of dwelling on how Dickens's sentimentality or his entertainer's instinct have got the better of his sense of realism, I would rather consider the possibility that Dickens is doing something in a mode to which the considerations of realism are irrelevant. That Pip and Estella should meet as they are shown to do is an impossible coincidence; seen from another point of view it is an inevitability. For according to this second point of view the garden is not a geographical locus and the couple do not meet in time. The scene takes place in a mythological world. In the original ending Pip had parted from Estella and thus relinquished his imagination. But Dickens cannot finally consent to the possibility of Estella and the imaginative past disappearing completely from Pip's destiny; in some place outside life, outside time, the two may meet again, and are indeed always together. The Satis House of the last scene is that place.

'After-life', 'Eternity', 'Paradise'. If The Death-Landscape carries sinister implications in its manifestations elsewhere, then we shall be coming to those; the point of their inception will admittedly be hard to define; in *The Old Curiosity Shop* the reader will feel them while the author remains unaware; in *Edwin Drood* they will be there for all to see. In the present case there is nothing to disturb the calm, or to suggest that it could be treacherous; there is no sense of sterility or claustrophobia.

What ultimately sets the tone of the Dickens passage - in spite of its melancholy - is the sense of calmly delighted recognition and of achieving what could never be achieved elsewhere, or before. Take the manner in which Dickens lets Pip spot the figure of Estella and catch up with her:

> A cold silvery mist had veiled the afternoon, and the moon was not yet up to scatter it. But, the stars were shining beyond the mist, and the moon was coming, and the evening was not dark. I could trace out where every part of the old house had been, and where the brewery had been, and where the gates, and where the casks. I had done so, and was looking along the desolate garden-walk, when I beheld a solitary figure in it.
>
> The figure showed itself aware of me as I advanced. It had been moving towards me, but it stood still. As I drew nearer, I saw it to be the figure of a woman. As I drew nearer yet, it was about to turn away, when it stopped, and let me come up with it. Then, it faltered as if much surprised, and uttered my name, and I cried out:
>
> "Estella!"
>
> "I am greatly changed. I wonder you know me."
>
> The freshness of her beauty was indeed gone, but its indescribable majesty and its indescribable charm remained. Those attractions in it, I had seen before; what I had never seen before, was the saddened softened light of the once proud eyes; what I had never felt before, was the friendly touch of the once insensible hand. (GE 59, 410-11)

Death, for the Victorian, was a world of meeting again those from whom one had been separated. Here Estella is the one who has gone on before, perceptible first as a solitary figure, then as a female one, finally as the beloved, the guide, the friend. In a sense it is now for the first time that she allows Pip to come up with her. On the casks she had always been ahead of him. And in fact Pip has just moved beyond the place of the casks on to the desolate garden-walk when he sees her coming towards him.

The departed are to be met again as they exist in one's memory - and yet they will be changed, irradiated by death (or do they derive their radiance from

some process in the functioning of memory, not death?) Dickens shows himself to be adept at keeping the realistic and the mythical levels of his discourse both alive and in balance with each other: Estella is Estella changed by time and the life she has led apart from Pip - yet she is also Estella of the "indescribable majesty", the old Estella of Pip's past now irradiated by the spiritual quality of what makes her more than real to him now: whether it is the aura that surrounds childhood memory, the back-reflected light of an old and intense imaginative time, or simply her presence and significance in the deepest part of Pip's mind, which is ultimately his own private death-world.

The sense in which Estella is still the Estella of Pip's childhood, and available to him and to us on these terms, can be seen in the reason for her presence on the site, and in the attitude towards it that she expresses:

> "Were you wondering, as you walked along, how it came to be left in this condition?"
> "Yes, Estella."
> "The ground belongs to me. It is the only possession I have not relinquished. Everything else has gone from me, little by little, but I have kept this. It was the subject of the only determined resistance I made in all the wretched years."
> "Is it to be built on?"
> "At last it is. I came here to take leave of it before its change." (GE 59, 411)

Dickens's grasp of the scene on the level of realism - his refusal to allow realistic psychology and the psychology of the myth (which states the eternity of memory, imagination, and unity in death) to lose their hard outlines and fuse into what would then be merely nostalgia - shows in his insistence that Estella, having clung to the plot through the years of her wretchedness, is now prepared to allow it to be built over. She, like Pip, can now live without her memories - and must do so. Yet on the level of myth the fact that she has up till now clung to the place - that at this symbolic moment she can be together with Pip there and it is still hers - means that it will be hers forever: that the scenes she has shared with Pip will always be a part of her, will be the hidden core of her life. Whether the one-mindedness of Pip and Estella towards the place of their past unites them in anything like love is a quite different question: I suspect

that their unity, and their unity with regard to the place, is Dickens's reference to a relationship that from the point of view of imagination's pure interiority - not from the point of view of practical living - is more important to him than love or marriage.

The feelings that draw Pip and Estella together here - I am tempted to say, the feelings that make it possible for Estella to appear to Pip here - are from another point of view the feelings that for the post-romantic mind cling to the churchyard. Memory, the thought of reunion with the remembered beloved, even the thought that the beloved, like his body in the grave, is with one in some particularly profound cavern of memory, protected from the possibility of decay to the extent that there are memories especially unavailable - and so invulnerable - to the conscious mind. To the associations of the churchyard one might add: the feeling for the ancestral past; for the pre-industrial world; perhaps for childhood; certainly an awareness of nature and nature's victory over man. Why has Dickens not set this scene in a cemetery? A cemetery would be the ideal setting for it.

The next best thing would be a ruin. There, too, greenery is taking over the walls and mounds, as the matted grass in the old cemetery covers the graves and encroaches on the stones. There, too, one might have played as a child. There, too, ancestral memories of the deep past remain. The Satis House that Pip comes back to has some qualities of a cemetery (the "low quiet mounds") and some qualities of a ruin, and it has a quality more elusive and suggestive than either.

> There was no house now, no brewery, no building whatever left, but the wall of the old garden. The cleared space had been enclosed with a rough fence, and, looking over it, I saw that some of the old ivy had struck root anew and was growing green on low quiet mounds of ruin. A gate in the fence standing ajar, I pushed it open, and went in. (GE 59, 410)

The special quality of the site (which gives it its visionary aura) is a peculiar kind of ambiguity. Concretely, it is merely a flat piece of ground surrounded incongruously by a wall; and yet for Pip it is potentially 'peopled' by buildings:

I could trace out where every part of the old house had been, and where the brewery had been, and where the gates, and where the casks. (GE 59, 411)

Satis House is still there, but only as a construction of the mind. It exists (as a ghostly presence projected onto the space of ground) only in Pip's imagination (and presumably Estella's); as imagination, however, it exists very strongly. We see once again Dickens's ability to transform a traditional symbol - in this case The Ruin - into a subtler and less romantic symbol, in which the essential part of the symbol becomes even clearer, as here with the absence and presence of the buildings; the empty flat site in reality, and the site full of meaning and remembered forms (with their personal significance) in Pip's imagination. When he enters the garden, he enters also an imaginative world, an area of his mind or living self that is a repository for his intenser memories.

2.

Death may be found scattered piece-meal in the world of the living: this is what emerged from our discussion of the limping Magwitch (see pp. V.17-26). Death's threat is a threat to deprive you, if not of your existence, then at least of some part of your faculties, of one or other of your organs and limbs. Death hides in the world of the inanimate, lurking in its rigidity or in its demonic mechanical animation; this world of dead things is always ready to absorb you, to take over your leg or your eye, transmuting them into its own substance. Here we have a sense of death that stems from the observation or imagining of death as physical decay and rigidification; it is a deduction from the appearance of corpses.

But what are we doing when we imagine a *world* of death? We are, first of all, exploiting the fact that the country of death is a great blank space on the map,

a space from which no traveller returns. We can only fill the landscape of death with what we know from life, and in fact it becomes the receptacle for those aspects of life which are masked by the practical consciousness.

For instance, consciousness appears to filter away what is both practically and imaginatively irrelevant to one, yet one's dreams sometimes indicate that the mind cannot rid itself entirely of the rubbish, that there remains a place in the mind that is like a junk-filled attic. This Kingdom of Death is the one encountered by Pip at the Hummums; death appears in this case as a dwelling among the objectness of things, in tormented awareness of their alienness and unassimilability for the imagination. Such a world is an improvement on Sartre's "L'enfer, c'est les autres"; here 'L'enfer, c'est l'autre tout court' - hell lies in the otherness, not so much of other people, as of the Other itself, the material world.

Fortunately there is a paradise to set up against this hell, a Death-Landscape that is the complementary opposite of this icy kingdom. If death - according to one interpretation - is like being in a lumber-room full of objects that bear no relation to oneself, in the cases we are going to study now it is rather like being in the chest in which all the imagination's keepsakes have been stored. The extreme polarization of the two worlds is a function of the imagination's particular conditions at the time - it being subjected, particularly in the big cities, to a newly chaotic crowd of impressions. To repeat what I said in my introduction: "Because there was never before such a cleavage between the 'poetic' and the mechanical, never before such areas in a man's experience of what was imaginatively unassimilable, there was never before such a necessity - and never such an opportunity - for the soul to choose its own imaginative property in the chaos of the world." (p.I.9) The Death-Landscape is a place of total resonance; it contains what the imagination, largely independently of the will, has chosen as bearing a special reference to itself.

3.

It is not absolutely necessary to recognize any reference to a death-world in the scene that ends *Great Expectations*. But one will miss out on something if one is without any sense of the scene as one that takes place *outside time*. Recognizing this should alert one to the central importance in the book of those moments when sequential time seems to break down, as with the return of Magwitch. At such moments Pip does not experience his life as a continuity in time, by which two similar experiences are decently separated from each other; he is aware of the two experiences fitting over each other within a thunderous simultaneity - as if his life had been squashed flat into a timeless spatial field in which various events or impressions have piled up in layers over various structural nodes. De Quincey's metaphor for the mind[1] gives the picture: a palimpsest used over and over, where inscriptions well distanced in time may be seen (by a chemical process) to coincide. The mind is different from a palimpsest in that its coincidences are never meaningless; the impressions of different times cluster under the influence of "the organizing principles which fuse into harmony, and gather about fixed predetermined centres, whatever heterogeneous elements life may have accumulated from without" (SdeP 511).

It is these "organizing principles", I take it, that are the determining factor in the creation of what he calls 'involutes':

> And, recollecting it, I am struck with the truth, that far more of our deepest thoughts and feelings pass to us through perplexed combinations of *concrete* objects, pass to us as *involutes* (if I may coin that word) in compound experiences incapable of being disentangled, than ever reach us *directly*, and in their own abstract shapes. (AS 13)

In reading the *Opium-Eater*, we can watch the formation of these 'involutes'. The traces in his mind of various events and their concomitant impressions seem to attract each other - like iron filings clustering round the poles of an unseen magnet. The impressions are organized by the mind below the level of consciousness, so as to reappear as compound images in opium-induced fantasies or dreams, or as

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1. See pp.II.6-7

factors part-determining the shape in which future experience will be received. *Great Expectations*, as we have seen, is another book in which it is worth while tracing the growth of the hero's 'involutes': alongside the external fate of the character's adventures in the concrete world, we can also find a fate more private, an adventure of the soul.

A study of *Great Expectations* shows that in this novel the two forms of Pip's fate are not separable. The dominating themes of Pip's 'interior' imagination tend to coincide with the traumatic events of his outer fate - both seem fashioned to exploit his psychological vulnerabilities and opennesses - and Pip's completion of the tasks set by his 'interior' imagination is paralleled at every point by his completion of the practical tasks set him by his relationships with Magwitch and Miss Havisham. But this is an exceptional achievement on Dickens's part. In the *Opium-Eater* the bond between the two 'fates' is much looser, though at certain points it can be felt. In Proust, the separation of outer life (which seems, for him, to be a texture of disappointment, illusion and deceit) and the inner life and fate (through which alone he finds happiness) becomes almost absolute.

It is well to invoke Proust here, as the separation of the two levels of life reminds one of Bergson's distinction between the two kinds of memory, and it is this distinction which underpins Proust's work. Bergson's first kind of memory, which I shall call the practical memory, contains what we have learned as suitable for future use: Bergson says it becomes part of the motor mechanisms. The other kind of memory, which Bergson calls the spontaneous memory, stores the actual images of the past, images that have a date, that remain attached to a particular time and place of the individual's life. These images may come to the aid of the practical memory. But there seems to be a particularly pure form of this kind of image, where the images are striking in their uselessness, the perfection in which they are preserved, and the difficulty the consciousness finds in resurrecting them.

Such images are, I take it, the images formed involuntarily (or even unconsciously): they "may flash out at intervals", but "disappear at the least movement of the voluntary memory" (HB 101).

Proust chose to make himself the poet of this last form of memory. For him it was totally outside the reach of the voluntary mind, and could only be reached by chance - by the accident of a more or less complex sense impression recalling an earlier one of the same type, and with it recalling its whole ambience. He recognized the rich and mysterious aura of the memories regained in this fashion; felt that such experiences held an assurance of eternity; even believed that such experiences were experiences of the essence of things.

The magic of Proust's involuntary memory is that it resurrects impressions that were *unnoticed* at the time and discovers in them an inexplicable glory. This could serve as an explanation of the aura that surrounds our memories of childhood - "Heaven lies about us in our infancy!" Far be it from me to deny the practicality of the child's consciousness. But he cannot be as sure as the adult of what can safely be ignored, so that a richer penumbra of half-conscious impressions must surround those perceptions which he retains as useful. A similar expansion of involuntary openness to experience - beyond the merely pragmatic - seems to take place in the condition of love. No wonder Dickens, in his portrayal of the 'interior' life that is contained as a portion of eternity in his 'death-landscapes', likes to fuse the childhood memory with the memory of a love-passion. Estella is a childhood sweetheart as well as a beloved woman. Many of Dickens's heroines are both women and children by various skilful sleights-of-hand.

A strange characteristic of nineteenth-century literature can perhaps be explained in a similar way, namely the important part which the brother-sister relationship plays in most of it. The early death of his sister is the origin of one of De Quincey's most enduring involutes (See AS ch.1). In *Wuthering Heights*

the half-siblings Catherine and Heathcliffe have a relationship that is like no other, but is so powerful that it dominates the book. Such an interest in childhood love-affairs is not a result of Victorian repression driving the writer back on the incestuous infantile sexuality of the nursery, as I have heard suggested. It is an artistic device for combining two elements - childhood experience and love - because these are the most powerful symbols of what I have called the 'interior' life, that life which in its majesty and 'indescribable awe'[1] is thought of as making up the content of the individual's world of death[2].

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1. The "indescribable majesty" of Estella's beauty here (GE 59, 411), like the "indescribable awe" felt by Pip after seeing Miss Havisham under the beam for the second time and then passing through Satis House (GE 49, 343), is due to a sense of coherence, a sense of the imagination's power to return one to one's uncompleted tasks, its power to unify a life from within.

2. It is interesting that Dickens himself reserved a special, intense kind of love (very much of the Death-Landscape kind) not for his wife, but for his sister-in-law. Of course Dickens could not have known Mary Hogarth in her childhood; but perhaps his thinking of her as a sister recalled his own sister.

CHARLES DICKENS AND THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE IMAGINATION

SECTION THREE

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP AND THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

1.

It seems undeniable to me that *The Old Curiosity Shop* is fundamentally a pathological work. The novel, as a novel, gets out of control: there is nothing to check or shape the free flow of the author's obsessions. This means that a study of Dickens's conscious intentions - the first priority in analyzing a successful novel - will be less helpful here than an analysis of Dickens's sickness and the myth-like forms and symbols by which he (without the least resistance) gives himself away. This approach is particularly worth-while in that Dickens's sickness, his morbidity, reflect a sickness and a morbidity that characterized the Victorian age.

The Old Curiosity Shop is an obsessive meditation on death, and the pathological force that drives it is beyond all doubt a powerful death-wish - a disgust with his own survival - that was experienced by Dickens after the death of his sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, in 1837. Steven Marcus writes:

> Dickens ... undertook to implicate the universe itself in his crisis. In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, he tried to coerce all of reality into reflecting his condition of spirit. The England of this novel is nothing less than a vast necropolis. Those who are not yet in their graves soon will be - they are merely the living dead. (SM 145)

These comments make us understand that the action of *The Old Curiosity Shop* cannot fruitfully be seen as a realistic plot taking place in a real world whose laws are to be respected: the action of the book takes the form of a myth, and the world alters its colouring to fit in with this myth that dominates everything from within.

Steven Marcus says "the course of the novel is determined when Nell and her grandfather flee from London to the country"(SM 135). But this is only true

because the movement from London to the country is already a movement into the past, and that means a movement in the direction of death. The myth of this book takes the form of a journey - Little Nell's journey - and this journey, seen symbolically, is a journey towards death. It is a journey that has many stages, each characterized by its own imagery - usually imagery of the past - and the journey finally leads through chambers more and more ancient, narrower and narrower, until Nell is in her grave.

Why is the imagery of the past associated with death? Here I shall be quoting Steven Marcus a lot, as he establishes this connection beyond doubt. He first points out that in his plans for *Master Humphrey's Clock* Dickens was already moving into the past:

> From the very beginning the general tendency of intention is clear - Dickens's imagination was involved in a movement towards the past, both the historical and the personal past. (SM 131)
>
> ... Dickens was actually trying to reinstate something that had passed, to restore himself imaginatively to an earlier condition of spirit. (SM 131)

The next stage is to consider in what way Dickens experienced Mary Hogarth's death, and what yearnings and fancies the death gave rise to:

> Mary Hogarth was, as he said, an inseparable part of his being ... (SM 134)
>
> ... Mary came partly to be an image of himself, of that conception of himself which he saw as still existing in the past. (SM 133)

She represented, then, a stage of his life that had passed, but that he longed to recapture. In a sense he *could* recapture it temporarily, for after her death he dreamt of her nightly for nine months. She fitted into that world of dream which is a world made up by the imagination itself, an inner world protected from the interferences that characterize the outer world. It is in this shape that he thought about her death. His thoughts ran continually on her still being conscious, and conscious of him. He wished to be buried beside her that their dust might mingle: more profoundly, he thought of their spirits as mingling after death. Once again, paradise or The Death-Landscape is the place of reunion, reunion between those whom an elective affinity of the imagination - or an early

association, which comes to much the same thing - had drawn together in life; Dickens seems to disregard entirely what society would consider the prior bonds of marriage or blood.

Steven Marcus explains the link between deep past and deep future, between memory and paradise. Dickens's longing for death takes the form of Nell's longing for harmony and peace. Here Marcus is commenting on passages in *Oliver Twist*:

> Dickens here displaces the recollection of harmony and pleasure further into the past, toward what has been forgotten, into unconscious memory, or into a metaphor of heaven. Slightly further on in the novel, Dickens returned to this idea, associating it with his memories of Kent. "The memories which peaceful country scenes call up, are not of this world, nor of its thoughts and hopes ... there lingers, in the least reflective mind, a vague and half-formed consciousness of having held such feelings long before, in some remote and distant time, which calls up solemn thoughts of distant times to come" (ch.32). At this point he appeared to be quite conscious of both the buried recollections from which this force of imagination springs, and of its circular character, the coherence of the transitory, idyllic, infantile past with the idyllic future that would recapitulate it. (SM 137)

Marcus says of Nell:

> She sets out, her grandfather's "guide and leader", and becomes a little picaresque girl, walking in no particular direction except away from London, and toward no particular destination except that region of existence she hopes to recover. (SM 140)

But this region of existence is not easy to find:

> They move toward the country, which at first they simply believe embodies the past, in all its freedom, purity and openness ... (SM 140)

> But though they pass through scenes which recall the pastoral, agricultural past, they can find no place to stop, and are forced to move beyond the simple past toward the primitive and prehistoric. (SM 141)

> That asylum is a little lost village, "a very aged, ghostly place", within sight of the primeval heart of Britain, "the blue Welsh mountains far away" (ch. 47). And the ruin which is their final place of rest is of such antiquity as to be virtually outside of time and history ... In this place, lost and buried in the past, but by the same curious token liberated from society and history, Nell temporarily finds a home. To withdraw any further, to move beyond the primitive, is to leave existence itself - which Nell is also about to do. (SM 142-3)

> The village they first visit has its serenity broken by the death of the little scholar (ch.25); in the village which is their ultimate destination, the principal employment is grave-digging, and Nell occupies her remaining time by tending the graves of children. (SM 143)

We shall return to this village, the last on Little Nell's journey towards the grave. It plainly prefigures the Cloisterham of *Edwin Drood*. Unlike that cathedral town, however, its prevailing atmosphere is not sinister. Little Nell's entry into the grave is a withdrawal from the world that can only pollute her. It is a final return into the purity with which she exists in Dickens's thought: that thought being an inwardness of yearning and cherishing that preserves its object - so Dickens believes at this stage - from change and corruption. Only later did he perceive that this very inner world in which his love was preserved had its own gradual dynamism, changing the flavour of what it held. So far the elegiac beauty of the last village is untainted.

2.

In spite of the narrative absurdity of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the various creations of the book have an artistic inevitability and rightness with regard to the completeness of the myth. Dickens has allowed some artistic shaping principle free rein, and the insights that result (as embodied in the material) would provide a mythologist-psychologist such as Jung much confirmation and new matter for thought. This is nowhere truer than in the creation of the Quilp-goblin. Quilp is necessary to the book because he is all that is left out in the conception of Little Nell and her fate. Because Dickens has seen Nell's purity and her fading into death (a death which is felt as a world of inward purity, equivalent to a paradisal place in the memory) as the entire good, Quilp can only be conceived of as totally evil. If Nell embodied the whole nostalgic pull of Dickens's death-wish, Quilp represented all that was in him that counter-acted this longing for purity and inertia in the cessation of existence. He is

the hardy clinging to life that Dickens, in his grief, could only experience as a horrible impurity in himself. And so great was this stubborn vitality and energy in Dickens, so great was his hold on life, that the energy of Quilp strikes us as one of Dickens's greatest strokes of intuition: he is a nightmare figure, a familiar, of wonderful purity of conception.

That Quilp is an archetype of the unconscious that may be thrown up in the dreams of any one of us seems to be backed up by one's response of confirmation to a passage in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, which I shall quote at length. The speaker is undergoing psychiatric therapy with a doctor she refers to as Mother Sugar.

> Last night I had a recurrence of that dream which, as I told Mother Sugar, was the most frightening of all the different types of cycles of dreams. When she asked me to 'give a name to it' (to give it form), I said it was the nightmare about destruction. Later, when I dreamed it again, and she said: Give it a name, I was able to go further: I said it was the nightmare about the principle of spite, or malice - joy in spite.
>
> The first time I dreamed it, the principle, or figure, took form in a certain vase I had then, a peasant wooden vase from Russia, that someone had brought back. It was bulbous, rather jolly and naïve in shape, and covered with crude red and black and gilt patterns. This vase, in my dream, had a personality, and the personality was the nightmare, for it represented something anarchistic and uncontrollable, something destructive. This figure, or object, for it was not human, more like a species of elf or pixie, danced and jumped with a jerky cocky liveliness and it menaced not only me, but everything that was alive, but impersonally, and without reason. This was when I 'named' the dream as about destruction. The next time I dreamed, months later, but instantly recognized it as the same dream, the principle or element took shape in an old man, almost dwarf-like, infinitely more terrifying than the vase-object, because he was part human. This old man smiled and giggled and sniggered, was ugly, vital and powerful, and again, what he represented was pure spite, malice, joy in malice, joy in a destructive impulse. This was when I 'named' the dream as about joy in spite. And I dreamed the dream again, always when particularly tired, or under stress, or in conflict, when I could feel that the walls of myself were thin or in danger. The element took a variety of shapes, usually that of a very old man or woman (yet there was a suggestion of a double sex, or even sexlessness) and the figure was always very lively, in spite of having a wooden leg, or a crutch, or a hump, or being deformed in some way. And the creature was always powerful, with an inner vitality which I knew was caused by a purposeless, undirected, causeless spite. It mocked and jibed and hurt, wished murder, wished death. And yet it was always vibrant with joy. Telling Mother Sugar of this dream, recreated for perhaps the sixth or seventh time, she asked as usual: 'And how do you name it?' and I replied as usual with the words spite, malice, pleasure in hurt; and she enquired: 'Only negative qualities, nothing good about it?' 'Nothing,' I said, surprised. 'And there is nothing creative at all there?' 'Not for me.'

She then smiled in the way I knew meant that I should think more about it, and I asked: 'If this figure is an elemental and creative force, for good as well as for evil, then why should I fear it so terribly?' 'Perhaps as you dream deeper you'll feel the vitality as good as well as bad.'

'It's so dangerous to me that as soon as I feel the atmosphere of that figure, even before the figure has appeared, and I know the dream is beginning, I struggle and scream to wake up.'

'It is dangerous to you as long as you fear it - ' This with the homely, emphatic, mother-nod, which always, in spite of everything, and no matter how deep I was embroiled in some hurt or problem, made me want to laugh. And I did laugh, often, helpless in my chair, while she sat smiling, for she had spoken as people do of animals or snakes: they won't hurt you if you don't fear them.

And I thought, as I often did, that she was having it both ways: for if this figure, or element, was so familiar to her in the dreams or fantasies of her patients that she instantly recognized it, then why was it my responsibility that the thing was totally evil? Only the word evil is too human a word for a principle felt to be, in spite of what part-human shapes it chose to assume, as essentially inhuman.

In other words, it was up to me to force this thing to be good as well as bad? That was what she was saying?

Last night I dreamed the dream again, and this time it was more terrifying than anything I've experienced, because I felt the terror, the helplessness, in face of the uncontrolled force for destruction, when there was no object or thing or even a dwarf to hold it. I was in a dream with another person, who I did not immediately recognize; and then I understood that this terrible malicious force was in that person who was a friend. And so I forced myself awake out of the dream, screaming, and when I awoke I put a name to the person in my dream, knowing that for the first time the principle was embodied in a human being. And when I knew who the person was, I was even more frightened. For it was safer to have that terrible frightening force held in a shape associated with the mythical or the magical, than loose, or as it were at large, in a person, and in a person who had the power to move me.

Once really awake, and looking back at the dream from the condition of being awake, I was frightened because if the element is now outside of myth, and inside another human being, then it can only mean it is loose in me also, or can only too easily be evoked. (DL 408-9)

Quilp, as an archetype of the unconscious, must be considered morally ambivalent: good or evil insofar as Dickens's mental arrangements are accepting or rejecting what he stands for. He may be seen as a principle of life: indispensable, indestructible, ruthless, anarchic. He has much in common with the Punch of the puppet-theatre, with Shakespeare's Caliban, Ted Hughes's Crow. When, in the novel, he dies, we do not believe in his death. After all, he has apparently come back from the grave before. He is the jack-in-the-box that pops up out of the coffin. He has a mysterious power over women - in this he is like Jasper in *Drood*, with his hypnotic power over Rosa; but the compelling power is to my mind more acceptable in Quilp, where it is allied to an extrovert

of energetic life, again taking a perverted form, have now entered even the sanctuary of the inturned mind, which has been brooding on youth and purity and beauty, and they work on it from within with a corrupting and destructive energy.

3.

It is easy to show that in the Cloisterham of *Drood* Dickens was returning not only to a similar environment to the final village in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, but also to a similar atmosphere and a similar spiritual state. A comparison of imagery in detail would prove this overwhelmingly; I propose merely to compare two passages. The first is from the amazing chapter 52 of *The Old Curiosity Shop*:

> The old church bell rang out the hour with a mournful sound, as if it had grown sad from so much communing with the dead, and unheeded warning to the living; the fallen leaves rustled; the grass stirred upon the graves; all else was still and sleeping.
>
> Some of those dreamless sleepers lay close within the shadow of the church - touching the wall, as if they clung to it for comfort and protection. Others had chosen to lie beneath the changing shade of trees; others by the path, that footsteps might come near them; others among the graves of little children. Some had desired to rest beneath the very ground they had trodden in their daily walks; some, where the setting sun might shine upon their beds; some, where its light would fall upon them when it rose. Perhaps not one of the imprisoned souls had been able quite to separate itself in living thought from its old companion. If any had, it had still felt for it a love like that which captives have been known to bear towards the cell in which they have been long confined, and, even at parting, hung upon its narrow bounds affectionately. (OCS 52, 360)

This is amazing, because it carries the elegiac sentiment, together with the sentiment of the desirability of death, further than one feels any other writer would be prepared to go. It wanders, completely unabashed, into speculations that any other writer would fear as maudlin. An extraordinarily pure type of poetry is created that can never have been reproduced before or since. Above all, it is astonishing that no hint of the macabre should have crept into a poetically realized meditation tending in such a direction.

Edwin Drood returns us to an almost identical world, but now a new element has entered into the emotional mixture:

> An ancient city, Cloisterham, and no meet dwelling-place for any one with hankerings after the noisy world. A monotonous, silent city, deriving an earthy flavour throughout, from its cathedral crypt, and so abounding in vestiges of monastic graves, that the Cloisterham children grow small salad in the dust of abbots and abbesses, and make dirt-pies of nuns and friars; while every ploughman in its outlying fields renders to once puissant Lord Treasurers, Archbishops, Bishops, and such-like, the attention which the Ogre in the story-book desired to render to his unbidden visitor, and grinds their bones to make his bread.
> .....
> In a word, a city of another and a bygone time is Cloisterham, with its hoarse cathedral bell, its hoarse rooks hovering about the Cathedral tower, its hoarser and less distinct rooks in the stalls far beneath. Fragments of old wall, saint's chapel, chapter-house, convent, and monastery, have got incongruously or obstructively built into many of its houses and gardens, much as kindred jumbled notions have become incorporated into many of its citizens' minds. All things in it are of the past. Even its single pawnbroker takes in no pledges, nor has he for a long time, but offers vainly an unredeemed stock for sale, of which the costlier articles are dim and pale old watches apparently in a slow perspiration, tarnished sugar-tongues with ineffectual legs, and odd volumes of dismal books. (ED 3, 37-8)

This is perhaps not the best quotation to show how *Edwin Drood* takes up the melancholy elegiac beauty of *Old Curiosity Shop*. What it does show is how the later book contains a sinister element not found in the earlier one: the sense of a living that is trapped in memory, in the past, in death - and is unable to free itself.

The description of the children making dirt-pies of nuns and friars does not so much indicate that the living are feeding off the dead, as would be right and healthy; rather, we have the sense of their not being able to move even one step away from the town's ancestral memories, and its dust; the sense of their being involved, from the start, in its backward-looking melancholy. I have spoken earlier - in connection with Trabb's boy in *Great Expectations* - of the use to which Dickens puts the wilder and more unruly elements of the boy-tribe in his books. They represent the rebellion of life, rebellion against the world of adults and the aged, against the claustrophobic straitjacket of the past. Small wonder that in *Edwin Drood* the boys are particularly vicious, and express themselves by stoning the most tombstoney of all the inhabitants of Cloisterham,

the old stonemason Durdles. The irony lies in the fact that Durdles himself has asked them - and pays them - to stone him home when drunk. So great is the inertia of Cloisterham that its boys - as anarchic a force as anything in Dickens - are necessary to keep it moving at all: they prevent it from sinking back into a *totally* static brooding will-less somnolence, an intoxicated sleep of inconceivably tombstoney and archaelogically ancient dreams.

The churchy element of the town, suggesting cloistered, meditative modes of existence and a way of life never changing through the centuries, is even architecturally incorporated (in a haphazard way) into the daily lives of the town's inhabitants. It is as if they live in close communion with the grave, or with undigestible fragments of the past.

And the pawnbroker's shop, that has ceased to be a place of exchange, has become merely another place for the preservation of the past. In it we have another of Dickens's lumber-room images, suggesting the contents of a mind. For it suggests a memory in which the bric-à-brac of times is stored, here without ever being disturbed. Even in such a secure and untouched part of the memory, however, time has wrought an alchemical change, tarnishing the sugar-tongs and covering the dim and pale old watches with a film of perspiration, as if they were submerged in a slowly viscid medium - perhaps of time itself or of the imagination grown old.

We should remember, however - and *Edwin Drood* reminds us - that this long and slow immersion in time, this accumulation of a special coating from time, may also render beauty to an object; for there is also the golden aura that objects may receive through long familiarity, or through long lying in the memory, or through association with childhood. In such cases we have the distillation of imaginative significance around an object until that significance and emotional familiarity becomes part of the object's sensuous presentation of itself. In *Edwin Drood* we have instances of this *enrichment* by time also, as for instance in the description of the closet kept by the china shepherdess, the Reverend

Septimus Crisparkle's mother. It is worth bearing in mind similar descriptions by Proust: certainly time and memory are profoundly involved in the mellowness and gold of Dickens's description.

> It was a most wonderful closet, worthy of Cloisterham and of Minor Canon Corner. Above it, a portrait of Handel in a flowing wig beamed down at the spectator, with a knowing air of being up to the contents of the closet, and a musical air of intending to combine all its harmonies in one delicious fugue. No common closet with a vulgar door on hinges, openable all at once, and leaving nothing to be disclosed by degrees, this rare closet had a lock in mid-air, where two perpendicular slides met; the one falling down, and the other pushing up. The upper slide, on being pulled down (leaving the lower a double mystery), revealed deep shelves of pickle-jars, jam-pots, tin canisters, spice-boxes, and agreeably outlandish vessels of blue and white, the luscious lodgings of preserved tamarinds and ginger. .... There was a crowning air upon this closet of closets, of having been for ages hummed through by the Cathedral bell and organ, until those venerable bees had made sublimated honey of everything in store; and it was always observed that every dipper among the shelves (deep, as has been noticed, and swallowing up head, shoulders, and elbows) came forth again mellow-faced, and seeming to have undergone a saccharine transformation. (ED 10, 119-20)

To explain the nature of this transformation of the contents of the cupboard into a mellow harmony (which is partly absorbed from the cathedral town and its mellow noises) - a harmony that is like the touch of alchemy, bringing out the golden or honey side of all things till everything is immersed in a warm glow, as of liquid amber - one might refer to a poem of Hofmannsthal's, in which he contrasts the external life with the inner. The poem begins with a list of things seen externally and as under the governance of process. Eventually, Hofmannsthal reaches the question: "Was frommt's, dergleichen viel gesehen haben?" - "What does it profit to have seen many such things?" - and then the poem changes direction:

> Und dennoch sagt der viel, der 'Abend' sagt,
> Ein Wort, daraus Tiefsinn und Trauer rinnt
>
> Wie schwerer Honig aus den hohlen Waben.
>
> (And yet he says much who says 'evening', a word from
> which profound meaning and sadness run
> like honey from hollow honeycombs.) (HvonH 30-1)

The German lyrical poets of the early twentieth century - Trakl, Rilke, Hofmannsthal - represent, with their nostalgia for the pre-industrial agricultural

world, the last vigorous kick of the lyrical temperament that the nineteenth century had fostered. Theirs was the last great stand of *Innerlichkeit* - inwardness or interiority - conceived of as a refuge from the disharmonious bustle of the modern world. Their search is for the harmony things make up in the soul: a harmony in the imagination that has been effected *by* the alchemy of the imagination. Hofmannsthal's "evening" is the end of the day when colours and outlines are softened - and when the mind's activity relaxes into meditativeness. It is also the evening of life when memories return in the form of a rich and spiritual content, and the world becomes a place of familiarity, a home of the spirit. The honey is the product of the imagination's work on 'things'. Much as honey is a compound of the bee's action and the nectar it transforms, the 'honey' of this poem is the combination of imagination and 'thing', forming the harmony and profundity of a dream that the spirit dreams within itself, or else the poetic essence of the poem that expresses it. It was Rilke who made a religion of this imaginative or poetic function. For him it was the destiny of man to say the name of the 'thing' in such a way as to express his human familiarity with it - and by so doing, by endowing the thing with a factor of the unique human imagination, to save it for eternity. This is not so far from what Proust conceived as the value of his spontaneous memory, except that Proust regarded his memory of things as an assurance to himself of eternity rather than the very act that ensured their eternity for the sake of the non-human universe.

Thus the contents of the china shepherdess's closet are - quite materially - preserves, maturing with time; but their mellow richness is also due to the action (upon the imagination of the perceiver) of time, familiarity, memory, the nostalgia for childhood. And the reason why Dickens so frequently dwells on the contents of cupboards, rooms, and shops may be that these are natural symbols for the preservation of memories in the mind, and for the process that they undergo there.

For this process to be seen in such purely positive terms is a rarity in this novel. We feel that it is only because he so consciously refuses to succumb to the past-embalming spirit of Cloisterham that Crisparkle's past can be something so wholesomely sweet and cheerful for him. Dickens is always emphasizing Crisparkle's mental and physical hygiene - his unremitting activeness - as if only such wilful and self-conscious present vigour could present a way of escape from the brooding pastness of Cloisterham. He obviously goes too far and convinces us that Crisparkle is an utter philistine and a pain in the neck - one would imagine (though the book doesn't say so) to those young people in particular whom he befriends. One presumes that Dickens's artistic imagination, moving ever further into the brooding mystery of its own functioning, had developed into something so intolerable to him that only the most unregenerate philistinism seemed able to offer an escape.

For the peaceful and mellow beauty of Cloisterham always contains, hidden in itself, an element of appalling stony ugliness. There are moments of a good enchantment, but when the good enchantment fades the ugliness is left like a reflux or after-taste or residue.

> They all three look towards an old stone gatehouse crossing the Close, with an arched thoroughfare passing beneath it. Through its latticed window, a fire shines out upon the fast-darkening scene, involving in shadow the pendent masses of ivy and creeper covering the building's front. As the deep Cathedral-bell strikes the hour, a ripple of wind goes through these at their distance, like a ripple of the solemn sound that hums through tomb and tower, broken niche and defaced statue, in the pile close at hand. (ED 2, 27)

Here, in the last words, there is only the faintest taste of the staleness and revulsion that the novel makes one feel increasingly[1].

Dickens's descriptions of Cloisterham frequently evoke the kind of ugliness that haunted Edgar Allan Poe. Dickens's evocation of this ugliness is in fact much the more powerful of the two writers', in that it is mingled still with the beauty that is its obverse. Poe's descriptions are horrifying because they are dead: in Dickens the deadness is felt as a stratum underlying emotion and

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1. Later quotations will make this point more than adequately.

and beauty as their already implied exhaustion. That is the difference. Nevertheless, what Poulet has to say about Poe does much to explain what Dickens was doing in his last novel. He writes as follows:

> To create a beauty that cannot exist in time, the poet is obliged to recompose the elements of that time and to invent with the help of their multiple combinations a new, imaginary duration, analogous to the divine eternity.
>
> This imaginary duration is that of dream. Cut off from communication with the exterior world, the dream has its own interior place, circumscribed, independent of all other places. It is the "land of dream." In like manner, possessing neither past nor future, existing within itself, unattached to any antecedent or subsequent life, dream has its own time. It is a perpetual present. (GP 330)

But Poulet continues:

> By dint of immersing itself in the depths, of withdrawing into the distance, of dissolving itself in the space of thought, the eternal present is metamorphized into an eternal past. This transformation is impressive, not by reason of its beauty, but, on the contrary, its ugliness. Different from the "fabulous past" of Melville, which energetically unfolds its myths only to collapse all at once through a caprice of the author or of destiny, Poe's oneirous past dies a slow and even nauseated death. A kind of gangrene corrupts it, disintegrates it, transforms it into mental rot. It is nevertheless the greatness of Poe to have fastened his gaze on this spectacle. He wanted to live his dream to the last moment, if not of its eternity, at least of its temporal existence - and, further still, through the charnel house.
>
> Thus, Poe's dream ends in death but not in total extinction. The consciousness of the dreamer survives the death of the dream, a witness of its disappearance. (GP 331-2)

4.

In *Edwin Drood* the arch-dreamer of dreams is of course Jasper, who might be said to embody the spirit of Cloisterham even more fully than Durdles. And we find him suffering from the very sickness described by Poulet.

> " ... How does our service sound to you?"
>
> "Beautiful! Quite celestial."
>
> "It often sounds to me quite devilish. I am so weary of it. The echoes of my own voice among the arches seem to mock me with my daily drudging round. No wretched monk who droned his life away in that gloomy place, before me, can have been more tired of it than I am. He could take for relief (and did take)

to carving demons out of the stalls and seats and desks. What shall I do? Must I take to carving them out of my heart?" (ED 2,34)

The pattern of Jasper's experience is one of enchantment yielding to a dreary void - a void, however, which soon presents a face of evil and malignancy. Now Dickens's actual accounts of Jasper's opium dreams are not very convincing, yet in this pattern he seems to have caught something of the opium user's experiences: the progress back to ordinary perception as the drug ceases to work; also the progress from the euphoria of early addiction to the horrifying visions of the later stages.

We find an account of the former in one of Poe's stories. (It is uncertain whether Poe was personally acquainted with opium experiences. In the literary personality that he forged for himself, however, he certainly presented himself as an expert, and addicts have confirmed the authenticity of his accounts.) Here is a passage from the first page of *The Fall of the House of Usher*:

I know not how it was - but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me - upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain - upon the bleak walls - upon the vacant eye-like windows - upon a few rank sedges - and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees - with an utter depression of soul, which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium - the bitter lapse into every-day life - the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart - an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. (EAP 7)

Alethea Hayter, in her book: *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, gives an account of the opium-user's other hell, which appears as a fall from grace after the initial stages of addiction:

After all these provisos, some account can be given of the more usual waking visions and nightmares of advanced addicts. They are often tortured by reptiles and insects - embraced by coiling snakes, trampled on by monsters, crawled on by worms, by ants, by microbes, thrust over precipices by tortoises or fiery dragons. Decaying things, still faintly touched with the likeness of beings once loved, stir beside them in rotting debris; their children, as they kiss them, turn to skeletons. ..... All that is safe, loving, stable, is decaying and suffering hideous change, but secret life and revolt are stirring in what were once humble unregarded tools and objects. (AH 55-6)

We have an account here, too, of how the loved and profoundly familiar shapes of inner experience turn gangrenous. De Quincey's section on *The Pains of Opium* gives a similar picture.

It would be wrong, however, to see the role of opium as central in our analysis of Jasper. Dickens is after bigger game. Opium is not to be conceived of as the primary cause of Jasper's corruption; it is a symbolic symptom. The life of the opium-user stands for the life of a man who has turned himself in upon himself in order to explore his own depths. A sense of being entrapped in the riches of his own meditations, and of finding this wealth suddenly equivalent to emptiness - this is how we are led to conceive of Jasper's experience.

> Old Time heaved a mouldy sigh from tomb and arch and vault; and gloomy shadows began to deepen in corners; and damps began to rise from green patches of stone; and jewels, cast upon the pavement of the nave from stained glass by the declining sun, began to perish. Within the grill-gate of the chancel, up the steps surmounted loomingly by the fast darkening organ, white robes could be dimly seen, and one feeble voice, rising and falling in a cracked monotonous mutter, could at intervals be faintly heard. In the free outer air, the river, the green pastures, and the brown arable lands, the teeming hills and dales, were reddened by the sunset: while the distant little windows in windmills and farm homesteads, shone, patches of bright beaten gold. In the Cathedral, all became grey, murky, and sepulchral, and the cracked monotonous mutter went on like a dying voice, until the organ and the choir burst forth, and drowned it in a sea of music. Then, the sea fell, and the dying voice made another feeble effort, and then the sea rose high, and beat its life out, and lashed the roof, and surged among the arches, and pierced the heights of the great tower; and then the sea was dry, and all was still. (ED 9, 112-3)

When we consider all that the organ meant to the Victorians, we realize just how radical a criticism of their emotional habits is being implied by this book. To the Victorians, organ-music meant solemnity, ultimately the solemnity of death. But it was also the music whose chords awakened corresponding chords in the heart. It was the music of meditation - in which passion, to be sure, played a part - but most of all passion for a past home, perhaps a home beyond all memory of this life. The organ was the music of the soul alone with itself. Dickens is making a diagnosis of the post-romantic sickness, and with it also a diagnosis of his own sickness; he is giving expression to his own unease, melancholy, isolation - also to a sense of corruption within himself, a sense

of guilt that was repressed in his everyday relations, but found expression in his work.

In the above-quoted passage we *know* Jasper is playing the organ, there is no need for Dickens to tell us. And the description of the music is such as to make us predisposed to accept Thomas Mann's thesis of the moral ambivalence of music. It is certainly true that Jasper's identity as a musician is ultimately more important than his use of opium. And having identified him as an artist, doomed to experience the Cloisterham experience more fully than any other inhabitant, we must ask how far he is an expression of a crisis in Dickens's own personality, insofar as it was the personality of an artist in a post-romantic era.

5.

There can be no doubt that Dickens intended Jasper for the man who killed Edwin Drood: he is portrayed as a potential murderer from the start.[1] Could Dickens have seen himself, even for a moment, in this role? Strangely enough, there is evidence that he did, though in jest.

> But he enjoyed the readings. Above all he enjoyed shocking his audiences with the murder and liked to joke about his "murderous instincts." "I have a vague sensation," he said, "of being 'wanted' as I walk about the streets." (EJ 1107)

Obviously these feelings are the consequence of his feeling his way into Sikes's personality for the readings of Nancy's murder - and also a consequence of the execration towards himself, while he was in that role, that he felt emanating from the audience. It still seems likely, however, that there was in him some degree of rage or guilt, normally repressed, that he was able to give an outlet

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1. The evidence is cited in Edmund Wilson's article: *Dickens : The Two Scrooges* (EW)

to in these readings and in the fantasies that he allowed himself to feel in connection with them.

Edgar Johnson points out how the emotion of jealousy and the agony of frustrated love only became a tragic theme for Dickens after a certain time of his life, but that after this time they became central[1]. This time corresponds with the time of Ellen Ternan's entry into Dickens's life. Did he experience, in his relationship with her, some combination of rage, jealousy, and guilt that would allow him to understand Jasper - perhaps that particular combination which might almost necessarily attack an older man in love with a young woman? If Dickens dramatized himself as a criminal, then what was the precise nature of the inner guilt that was troubling him? Or what part of that guilt did he find interesting enough, as an artist, to want to exploit it in his novels?

Judging by the last novels Dickens does not seem very interested in the idea of a guilty love - in the sense of a love that is adulterous. It is true that Edgar Johnson tries to make a case for this in his analysis of Dickens's response to *Faust* at the Paris Opera, showing how every detail that had moved Dickens could have had its own application to Dickens's situation:

> What were the mournful things that echoed within his heart to that story and that music? What analogies did he feel to the infernal red atmosphere surrounding Mephistopheles and the innocent brightness of Marguerite's chamber window? What intimate meaning was there for him in the acceptance of those jewels which shows that Marguerite has already yielded to Faust in her heart and that the ultimate surrender will soon take place? What symbolic identification between himself and Faust, who wields magical powers? What foreshadowing of the future in those fading leaves and flowers and in that fading light? (EJ 1008)

Here the only real point applying to the whole of the double equation Faust= Dickens=Jasper is that concerning Faust's magical powers. We are reminded of the hypnotic powers that Jasper wields over Rosa, and their connection with Jasper's art, his music. Here the parallel with Dickens's own powers is evident.

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1. As with Pip in *Great Expectations*, Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Bradley Headstone in *Our Mutual Friend*, Jasper in *Edwin Drood*.

It seems most promising to explore Dickens's guilt - for if Jasper was an embodiment of something in Dickens, then Dickens must have been appalled at something in himself - as an expression of an old man's self-distrust on finding himself in love with (and compelling love in return from) a younger woman. This is essentially - though not on the surface - Jasper's situation. It is true that he cannot be intended to be all that much older than the lovers he envies. Yet Dickens repeatedly refers to him, in conjunction with Edwin, as "the older man". Also the connection that we feel between him and the ancient cathedral town marks him as in some way old in spirit. So, too, with his jealous love, not only of Rosa, but also of Edwin, whom he murders. It is not a matter of years. Dickens is showing us an old spirit, old somehow through introversion, now passionately in love with youth - and there is a canker in the emotion.

The guilt of the older man in love with a younger woman would in this case not be that of having too little to offer, but of having too much: a love that is inappropriate and yet intense, overwhelming like the ancient richness of Cloisterham itself. With Dickens we have to do with a man becoming conscious of having missed some one happiness in his life - Edgar Johnson is perfectly convincing in his demonstration that this was a central feeling of Dickens's - and who despairingly wished to capture something that would serve as the object of his longing before it was too late. What he had to bring was the immense passion of a great artist's yearning and frustration - an inner longing that the years had deepened and enriched. This must certainly have been some form of power to exert over a beloved - perhaps an inappropriate and disproportionate power for a young woman to feel directed at her. For what was Dickens's longing? Surely something that involved factors beyond personal love or a desire to rejuvenate himself. Edgar Johnson describes very well how a whole series of Dickens's experiences with women must have led to an ever intensified consciousness of the problem:

> The fatal confluence established by his old unhappy passion for Maria Beadnell, his ideal vision of Mary Hogarth, the deepening misery of his life with Catherine, and the painful evaporation of a dream with Maria's reappearance, all led almost inevitably to his longing for the solace of a beautiful and youthful tenderness and to his desiring to know, before it was too late, the enchantment that had always eluded him, but it did not lead to his finding happiness or understanding. (EJ 1005)

For the problem seems to go beyond any particular woman and to be insoluble through any woman. It *is* a longing for youth; but not for youth as vigour - Dickens had plenty of that. The emotion is closer to that of Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*: a yearning for the imaginative richness of early life - but in this case from the point of view of another richness, a richness that has become wearisome, the richness of a man who has lived long in the inner chambers of his mind together with his symbols, and cannot escape from this prison treasure-house.

That this predicament must have been typical for the imaginative artist of the Victorian era seems borne out if we compare this sense of 'oldness' in *Edwin Drood* with what I have always found to be the most powerful emotion emanating from Tennyson's writings: an emotion that certain lines of *Tithonus* and *Ulysses* give voice to. Again it is necessary to stress that it is not a matter of actual years constituting the kind of age we are discussing. A year of grief may be the equivalent of aeons in the familiarity a man grows into having with his inner self. It is in his early twenties, after the death of Hallam, that Tennyson wrote the major part of these two poems, in which he dramatizes himself in portraits of old men: in *Tithonus* he even pictures himself as eternal old age in love with eternal youth.

> But thy strong Hours indignant worked their wills,
> And beat me down and marred and wasted me,
> And though they could not end me, left me maimed
> To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
> Immortal age beside immortal youth,
> And all I was, in ashes. (ALT 204)

It is the co-presence of youth, of a world ever-renewed - not the decrepitness of age - that is the real pain, however; from this co-presence comes the real searing melancholy of the poem:

> A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
> A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.
> Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
> From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
>
> And bosom beating with a heart renewed.
> Thy cheek begins to redden through the gloom,
> Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine ... (ALT 205)

It is the pain of needing to witness, and to sympathize, yet again, and yet again, and never to be free of either term in the sympathy of (a) lyrically perceived world and (b) contemplative self; Tithonus (and even Tennyson) suffers the no-way-out of an imagination too long immersed in watching the world become without actively taking part in the becoming. There is simply *no* way out in *Tithonus*. *Ulysses*, expressing a similar emotional predicament, ends with a call to action, but the call to action is false and hollow beside the lines that recall the predicament -

> The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
> The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
> Moans round with many voices. (ALT 51)

The voice that is speaking is the voice of the man for whom all objects around him have become laden with lyrical meaning; so that as he lives between them - as they change and become again - they call him with familiar voices; they bear with them the mystery of inwardness, to which there is no resolution; they are forever requiring; they are the presence of all that was ever desired and yet they themselves are always a yearning; they are a home that is around him and yet beyond his reach, not yet to be returned to. *Here* lies the promise, the mystery, the problem - for the artist there can be no turning away; that Dickens was so eager to send Pip back into the heroism of the active daily life - where he will fulfil a muted version of the destiny to which Telemachus is abandoned in *Ulysses* - expresses a certain treachery to his artistic destiny, it seems a sign that some part of himself longed for an escape, for reasons that a study of *Edwin Drood* makes clear.

For much of the Victorian age the private life of the imagination was the only available life of the imagination; but in its privacy it carried the seed of its own decay.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONCLUSION

1.

This thesis began with an enquiry into what formal principle, if any, gave De Quincey's autobiographical work, *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, unity as a work of art. Such an enquiry is given especial point by De Quincey's own evident sense of the existence of some kind of unity, together with his inability to settle on any single explanation of it. It was found that the earlier section dealing with De Quincey's life was closely related to the later sections dealing with his dreams, in that the former supplied the imagery that was to recur in the latter. But further examination - particularly of the later version of the book - showed that it was not possible to reduce the matter to a simple pattern of cause and effect. De Quincey was haunted by the recurrence of certain groups of images in both his waking and his dreaming life, and it was not always the case that the dream followed on the waking experience. De Quincey's own image for the mind in the *Suspiria* - that of the palimpsest (see p.II. 6-7) - offered the basis for an explanation. The image of the palimpsest is at first glance a passive image for the mind, recalling the model of the empiricists: "Everlasting layers of ideas,images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light." However, unlike the successive layers of writing on a palimpsest, these images do not, according to De Quincey, lie higgledy-piggledy in the mind, but are "[gathered] about fixed predetermined centres." The passage comparing the mind to a palimpsest seemed thus to give an explanation for the main artistic principle of the *Opium-Eater*. By giving an account of the images that haunted his consciousness, De Quincey was making

the "organizing principles", the "fixed predetermined centres" of his own mind appear to us: he was drawing his own self-portrait in a particularly intimate way. Moreover this portrait of a self was coupled with an intense sense of a life and experience that were fated. It seemed clear that this 'fatedness' was intimately tied up with De Quincey's haunting by certain images, if not identical with it. Thus the repetition of imagery was not merely a way in which a static portrait might be drawn: it was also a way of telling a story.

Here we had come to the main recurring theme of our investigation: the telling of a story by way of the images that haunt a man's life. The study of De Quincey offered other opportunities as well, and raised other questions. In spite of what I have just said about the impossibility of explaining all the chains of imagery by simple cause and effect, it nevertheless remains true that the imagery frequently does take flight from an incident in De Quincey's life, and that De Quincey places great emphasis on these incidents, though their practical significance as incidents appears negligible. Part of the chapter on De Quincey was thus given to examining the mysterious impact of these incidents and scenes - comparable to Wordsworth's 'spots of time' (see p.III.3) - and the ingenious means that De Quincey uses to convey their effect on him to the reader. The question could also be raised whether De Quincey's spiritual adventure among the images of his mind was ever related to the more usual concerns of the novel (or, for that matter, the autobiography) - for instance, to moral decisions or to guilt. An instance of this kind of relationship could in fact be found in the incident of the Malay visitor (see pp.II.16-21). But on the whole the account of De Quincey's practical and moral life and the account of his imaginative life still remain separate elements in the *Opium-Eater*; for all its brilliance and formal inventiveness, as a work of art it still needs the excuse that it is autobiography; in spite of the closer knitting of the second version, it does not ever quite become the equivalent of a novel.

After the discussion of the *Opium-Eater*, a transitional chapter developed some of the themes introduced there, and also introduced new themes that would eventually make part of the broader synthesis and fuller unity of *Great Expectations*. This chapter served the incidental purpose of showing that the phenomena which were being examined appeared also outside the works of De Quincey and Dickens.

The first part of the chapter dealt with a passage from *The Prelude* in which Wordsworth discusses the existence of 'spots of time' that have a lasting effect on the individual's imaginative life. It was the nature of these 'spots of time'- how they felt, what revelations were afforded by them, how they were recorded by the poet - that concerned us here. This discussion, by offering a bridge, was able to serve as a link between De Quincey's chain-creating experiences and Pip's: common to nearly all these experiences, it became clear, was an unease ranging from slight embarrassment or awkwardness to intense alarm; in all there seemed to be a cessation or diminishment of active intention on the part of the experiencer, something like a hiatus in his sense of the flow of time; a recognition of helplessness, of there being nothing for him to do in the particular situation in which he found himself.

In the second part of the chapter I discussed briefly the way in which 'haunting by imagery' occurs in *David Copperfield*. Whereas De Quincey tends to be haunted by spatial configurations of imagery - landscape or architecture - David's spiritual adventure lies in a recurrence of *people* - variations, it seems, on some group of primordial images, containing in particular that of a mother. Looking at *David Copperfield* thus introduced us to a new element in what was to make up the spectre haunting Pip - this spectre consists, as in De Quincey's case, of a landscape; it consists of objects such as a file; but it also consists of a person, a person between bogeyman and surrogate father - the novel lives largely in the shift between the two. Meanwhile the section on

Copperfield also gave me the opportunity to analyze one of David's own 'spots of time' and show threads of similarity leading back to the Wordsworth passage and forward to some aspects of similar experiences in *Great Expectations*.

The third section of the transitional chapter deals with some of the short stories - fairy stories one might call them - of E.T.A. Hoffmann. I brought these into my argument as stories which explicitly show men overcome by a secret fate that has been waiting for them, a fate that announces itself in the hypnotic effect that some image, event or personage has on them (and on them alone), tearing them out of their philistine existence and introducing them to a magical world-within-the-world. By this world Hoffmann means to signify the world as it appears to a man committed to the life of the imagination: his heroes are potential artists suddenly experiencing the call of their destiny. This super-romantic identification of a psychological obsession with the imaginative life *tout court* is one that the more level-headed Dickens would be unlikely to endorse quite so simply, yet it has its degree of truth; and Hoffmann's viewpoint was able to act as a confirmation for me of my sense that Pip's imaginative life in *Great Expectations* was inseparable from his haunting by the worlds of Magwitch and Estella, and might be lost on his breaking free.

The most important part of this section on Hoffmann, however, was the analysis of his story *The Sandman* : here the imaginative adventure of the hero unfolds from a traumatic experience in childhood - as was to be the case also in *Great Expectations*. This further dimension of psychological trauma was an element we had not encountered before in our examination of hauntings by imagery, and it was an important one: psychological trauma is a factor that demands to be dealt with at least partly in everyday life and action. An indication had already been given us of how Dickens would succeed in fusing the inner and outer life of his hero. Moreover, *The Sandman*, like *Great Expectations*, contained a bogeyman, and a bogeyman who returned. The story is like a crude fairytale version of the novel.

At this stage we had in our hands, like the fragments of a mosaic, all the main ingredients that were to go into that aspect of *Great Expectations* which consisted of a haunting by imagery; what we did not have was the pattern of the synthesis that Dickens was to make of them - a synthesis which was to give each ingredient a new dimension of meaning. Also, *The Sandman* had given us only the vaguest prefiguration of what was to be the supremely beautiful structure of Dickens's plot: the shape made by encounter, absence and return, by the binding and loosing of psychological knots. It was advisable to trace this shape in microcosm first, so the first chapter of the *Great Expectations* section followed the Satis House strand of the novel from beginning to end. In this way we were spared the complexity of the Magwitch theme in our first encounter with the novel's characteristic form; moreover, the conscious hand of the artist plotting and planning was more visible in the Satis House strand - in the Magwitch strand Dickens works with an accuracy and delicacy that can only have been given by largely unconscious intuition.

In the Satis House strand we were able to analyze the shock effect of Miss Havisham on Pip, and its hallucinatory consequences; we could trace the building of configurations and sequences of imagery; we saw how these came to constitute a fate for Pip, and finally how this fate came to present him with real moral obligations - which in critical moments stated their claims on him not in the ordinary way, but through his sudden awareness of this imagery which had become so personal to him.

We found that the same general pattern applied to Pip's dealings with Magwitch. His original meeting with him leaves traces on his mind which express themselves in the novel as a recurrence of imagery connected with him. This imagery is entwined with the moral obligation laid on Pip when the shock of disaster enables him to free himself for action. Part of the obligation is to himself: to free himself from the bogeyman that has been haunting his mind.

But this personal task is inseparable from more outgoing obligations: Pip needs to come to terms with Magwitch for Magwitch's sake too - he owes it to him to learn to separate the real person from the mental bogey that at first arises with his appearance. Without this he can hardly deal adequately with the practical tasks set by Magwitch's situation and his own; conversely, dealing with the practical tasks helps him to dispel the neurotic distortions of his experience. The labour of mental hygiene and the practical tasks run parallel and implicate each other at every point.

The analysis of Pip's two obsessions, the obsession of 'Enough House' and the obsession of the convict, would have been incomplete if it hadn't also comprised an analysis of the content of the obsessions and the revelations they can afford Pip. One of the chief revelations is that the obsessions are connected, that Miss Havisham's foster-daughter is the real daughter of the convict. Through discovery of this relationship Pip wins through to a unified human solidarity and commitment that transcends the conceptions of society he has inherited. Taken on its own, the study of Miss Havisham showed Dickens dealing with a pattern that would concern us later in discussing *Edwin Drood*: the inner corruption threatening a person who lives in a world shaped almost entirely by his or her own intensest passions or memories. Miss Havisham is the woman living in a world shaped by the imagination brooding on what has been. Magwitch, on the other hand, is the man who has shaped an autonomy for himself although he has been treated as an object by the world. Thus his story is strangely parallel to Pip's. What he stands for is one of the major revelations of the book, which is why a whole chapter of this thesis has been dedicated to his meaning (Section 2, Chapter 8)

What is the 'meaning' of Estella? In the last chapter of the *Great Expectations* section it was time to ask what had remained to Pip of his imaginative life after he had cast his mental demons, and we found that in the later version of the book's ending Estella was what remained. I argued that Dickens had prepared

us to accept Estella as representing Pip's imaginative life. She remains to him in a strangely ethereal sense, however. In her appearance in the last chapter, she has a mythical rather than a real presence. Pip's imaginative life has retreated into a distant realm of memory and nostalgia, where it maintains its richness without the possibility of disturbance by any new emotional upheaval. At this stage we formed the concept of 'The Death-Landscape'. The richness of the imaginative life, withdrawn into a realm of the mind which was all its own, corresponded to a Victorian conception of the world of death; and the imagery connected with this world of death was symbolic of the sealed world of the imaginative past.

At this point, then, we moved to a discussion of 'The Death-Landscape', taking this as an embodiment in symbol of what had been expressed in narrative form in the image-sequences. Henceforth what could be said about 'The Death-Landscape' was seen as applying also to the spiritual adventure underlying the image-sequences. Both imply a certain degree of introversion, by which the soul isolates itself in an intensely-lived imaginative world of its own. In the shift of mood between *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* - each dominated by its own Death-Landscape or Landscapes - Dickens identifies a morbid dynamic, a shift towards corruption and decay, both in the man who lives this 'private life of the imagination' and in the world of emotionally laden symbols he makes for himself. Thus we could use *Drood* as Dickens's critique not only of his own emotional life (or, rather, one aspect of it), but as a critique of the formal element we had been analyzing and of those uses of the imagination which it could express most readily.

This thesis, then, first traces the development of a new formal element in narrative; it attempts to give an idea of the emotional richness and energy which the form gave expression to; in its discussion of *Great Expectations* it shows Dickens effecting a synthesis between the new element and ordinary realistic narrative (and thus going beyond the new element's limitations);

finally, the thesis attempts a critique of the form and the conditions of emotional life that gave rise to it, using Dickens's own testimony.

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